

SEVEN YEARS IN
SOUTHERN ABYSSINIA

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

TREKKING THE GREAT THIRST:
TRAVEL AND SPORT IN THE KALAHARI DESERT
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GRAMMAR OF THE GALLA OR OROMO
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H. WALKER (S.P.C.K., 1922).




PORTRAIT OF THE AUTHOR, BY AN ABYSSINIAN ARTIST.

[Frontispiece

SEVEN YEARS IN SOUTHERN ABYSSINIA

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TO

MY ABYSSINIAN SERVANTS

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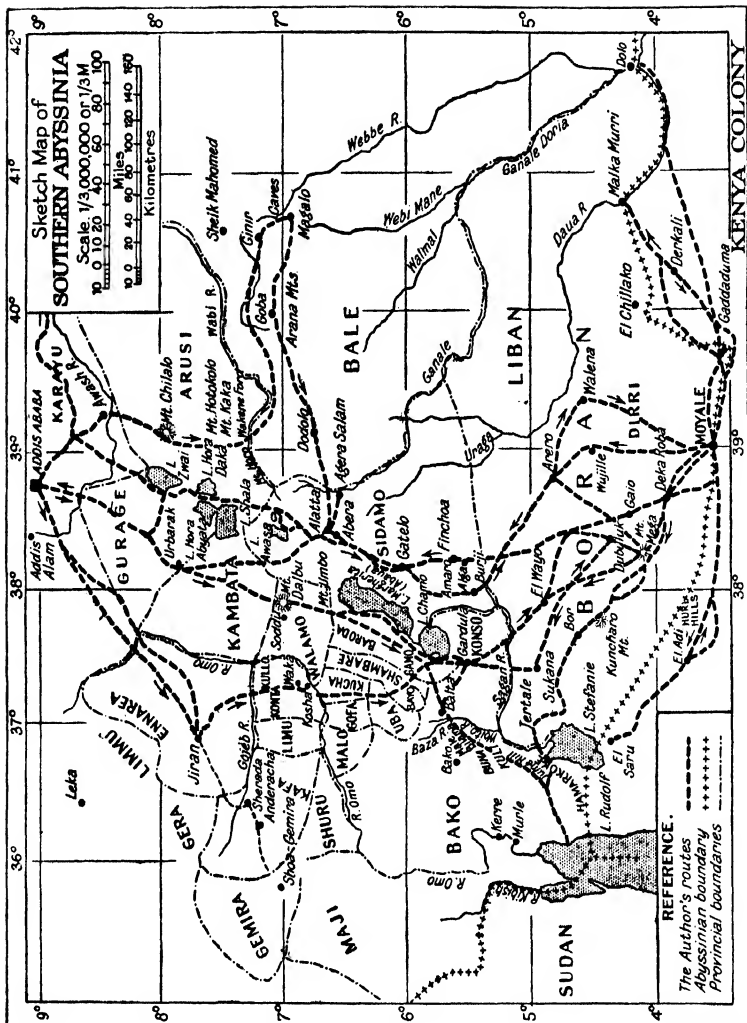
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SEVEN YEARS IN SOUTHERN ABYSSINIA

CHAPTER I

ABYSSINIA AND ITS PEOPLE

Journey out—Abyssinian seals and letters—impressions of the capital—the building of modern Abyssinia—Theodore and Menelik—Abyssinian titles—racial, religious, and linguistic divisions.

JUST after the outbreak of war in 1914 when stationed with my regiment in Norfolk, I was appointed to the new post of British Consul for Southern Ethiopia. I applied for special permission to remain with my regiment but was refused. In consequence I sailed for East Africa via the Cape when the issue on the Marne was still hanging in the balance. The hopes and fears of all our ship's company were fixed on Europe, and it was difficult even for a newly-fledged Consul to devote himself as much as he might have done to the acquiring of book-knowledge about the country for which he was bound. The inevitable crop of war rumours and the daily quarrels among the amateur strategists which these inspired relieved the tedium of the voyage. Mombassa, however, was reached without serious incident. Having—fortunately—no reason for remaining on the coast, I proceeded at once by train to Nairobi, the capital of the East Africa Protectorate, or Kenya Colony, as it is now styled. A fortnight in this

delightfully sociable town passed all too quickly. I received my instructions from the Governor, picked up from officials and others many and conflicting accounts of the kind of life that was in store for me, and at last on 4th November set out on the final stage of my journey to Abyssinia.

My route from Nairobi lay northward to Archer's Post and then down the Uaso Nyro River to the Lorian Swamp. From there the road ran to Wajir, and after that into the administrative area known as the Northern Frontier District. Owing to the War it was not an easy matter to arrange for the transport of my supplies. When I reached Archer's Post, I received a letter from the officials stationed at Marsabit to the effect that they had only been able to get for me two police and three men, Somalis, to act as my guard to Moyale, and that these were probably bad characters, as they knew nothing about them. These men were to go right through with me, and in addition I was provided with carriers from post to post. When I left Archer's Post, I must have had about a hundred carriers, fine men from Meru, and the journey went as smoothly as possible till we reached a place near the edge of the Lorian Swamp, called, I think, Arodima, where I had to turn off to go to Wajir. Here the Meru porters had to return, and henceforth I was dependent on camels. As I was left with only the few men referred to above, the various Somali headmen living at this place concluded that I was very small beer, and their attitude showed it. Numbers of them came with goats and sheep, which they offered as presents. I said I did not want them, as I knew they expected twice their value in return and it would have been cheaper to buy them. At last, however, as they insisted, I took two of the animals, put them in a kraal, thanked the donors profusely, and went away, giving nothing in return. The stream of people bringing presents at once ceased,

the queue vanished, so also very shortly afterwards did the two presentation goats I had placed in the kraal.

Arodima was a desolate and depressing spot, and to my annoyance I had to wait here several days while camels were being procured. A plausible Somali with whom I got into conversation whetted my appetite for sport with a tale of a wonderful elephant carrying the biggest tusks known to man. The country all around consists of dense thorn bush, and into this country I went with the optimistic Somali and one of my servants. We toiled the whole of one day, slept the night in the bush, and then toiled back without seeing any sign whatever of big game.

Shortly after leaving Archer's Post, when outspanned at one of our camps, my only mule was grazing with one of its legs attached to a long rope tied to a tree. Now this mule had an innocent face, had behaved extremely well from Nairobi, and had given me the impression that if I let it loose for a short time it would play the game—have a roll, enjoy the succulent grass at its leisure, and not run away. I had not then lived eight years with mules as I have since. The boys protested and said it was a mistake. I overruled their objections with harsh words, and the mule was released. I still believe it winked at me as it put up its tail and cantered away. I did not see that mule again for three years, and bitterly did I repent my folly as I tramped along day after day in the sun.

After a great deal of trouble, the necessary camels, twenty-five or thereabouts, were obtained, and one afternoon everything was at last loaded up and we started. Loading all these camels with the few men I had was a big undertaking, and it was therefore necessary to make as long treks as possible in order to minimise the delay and trouble caused by loading

and unloading. I saw the caravan off, and told the men to go on while I waited behind till it got cooler. Late in the afternoon I set out with a light heart at the idea of quitting this most unattractive camping place. I had only gone a short distance when I found my whole caravan outspanned. It was one of those occasions when one feels so angry that words are inadequate. The men I had brought with me had evidently made some conquests in the village we had just left and were determined to spend the night there. I held a rapid inquiry and adjudged the ringleader to receive ten strokes. His comrade in wrongdoing who was ordered to administer the punishment made the position more ridiculous and me more angry (if that were possible) by proceeding to beat him as if he were a piece of Dresden china. I soon rectified this error by giving the punishment myself. I did not like the looks of the three Somalis, so before sitting down to drink some tea I took away their rifles and laid them against the table. In the middle of tea the three men came up to my table and said they wanted to speak to me. Then with a bound they rushed to the table, seized their rifles, and fled into the bush. I was never more taken by surprise in my life. I was now left with one cook and one personal servant to load all the camels. How long it took I should not like to say, but it was done at last and we continued on the road to Wajir.

At Wajir I met an old school friend, Deck, who fitted me out with fresh camels and men for the last stage of my journey to Moyale. This stretch of road is very dry and passes through monotonous thorn bush till the edge of the Abyssinian escarpment is reached. It then ascends abruptly, through beautiful scenery, to the top, where the atmosphere is delightfully cool in comparison with that of the deserts below.

Thus on 28th December I arrived at my immediate

destination, the frontier station of Moyale. The distance from Nairobi to Moyale is not more than 500 miles. The dates I have mentioned will therefore give some indication of the character of the route—and incidentally of the kind of difficulties which face the civil and military authorities engaged in the hard task of administering the Northern Frontier District.

Moyale is a frontier post and little else. It boasts a fort, a small garrison of King's African Rifles, and a District Commissioner with offices and domestic quarters. At this time Glenday was in charge of the District, and Dickinson commanded the troops. During the next two years, when I was roaming about Southern Abyssinia with no permanent headquarters and scarcely ever a roof over my head other than a canvas one, Moyale, with its simple comforts and the cheery hospitality of its few British residents, meant more to me than ever a Ritz or a Claridge's could mean to a globe-trotting millionaire. It is situated right on the frontier between Abyssinia and Kenya Colony; in fact, on more than one occasion Abyssinians have assured me that the place is really in their territory. From the little eminence on which it is built one can look across to the Abyssinian *boma* or stockade on the other side of the frontier about half a mile away.

At Moyale I found awaiting me my commission as His Britannic Majesty's Consul for Southern Ethiopia (the official name of Abyssinia is Ethiopia) with the *exequatur* of the Abyssinian Government attached and two passes, one from the Minister for War and the other from the Minister of the Interior. These passes, like all Abyssinian documents, were not signed but had seals stamped at the foot of the writing. The art of writing in Amharic, the official language of Abyssinia, is almost a profession by itself, which is not remarkable when one realises

that the alphabet contains somewhere about 200 characters. In consequence, Abyssinians invariably use seals instead of signatures, and a document without a seal is practically useless. These seals consist as a rule of a representation of some object, such as a rhinoceros horn or a cross, surrounded by the name of the owner in Amharic characters. Later on, when I found it necessary to have an Abyssinian seal of my own, I adopted a bird as my emblem, but I doubt whether the device would be accepted by the College of Heralds as the Hodson crest. People who do not rise to the dignity of a seal have therefore no device or signature at the end of their letters. This does not make the letter incomprehensible, as one might imagine, because the names of the sender and of the recipient are contained in the letter itself. This is a typical example of an ordinary letter :

From Gerazmach Gashi : let it reach the honourable Balambaras Waldi Gabriel.

How did you pass the night ? Thank God I am well. By the grace of God I have reached Gardula safely. My child has been ill, but by God's grace he is now better. May God keep us in safety till we meet again. *Date.*

Seal.

The seals mentioned above are made out of the silver Maria Theresa dollar, melted down and then engraved. They are often made with a loop, through which a cord is passed ; the seal is then worn for safety round the neck. To prepare the seal for use, it is pressed upon a small pad dampened with blue ink. After the impression has been made at the foot of the letter, the seal is usually cleaned by rubbing on the hair of the owner. The Abyssinians are extraordinarily punctilious about letters. They have different forms of address for superior and inferior,



ABYSSINIAN SEALS.

and failure to acknowledge a letter, and in some cases to send one, causes the greatest umbrage.

I had my first experience of the tortuous ways of Abyssinian officialdom before I could cross the frontier. I sent over my passes to the Abyssinian sentries. The officer in charge replied that the passes were in order, but that I was to remain where I was until he had had time to consult the Governor of the province, Fitaurari Waldi, who of course was not immediately accessible. This was simply an excuse to delay me as long as possible. I insisted that if, as they admitted, my passes were in order, they could not stop me, and after some discussion, I carried my point and left Moyale on the last day of 1914. I had with me only a cook, an interpreter, a couple of syces or grooms, two mules and eight camels.

In order to reach the capital, Addis Ababa, I had first to cross the large province of Boran. As I had not been able to meet the Governor, Fitaurari Waldi, to present my credentials, I decided not to follow the main route, but to go round by Arero instead in the hope of seeing Gerazmach Gashi, one of the principal subordinate officers, and so of avoiding any suspicion of passing through the country secretly. The early part of the journey was over undulating country, lightly covered with thorn and other bush, with here and there an isolated eminence or a group of hills rising conspicuously. In the Northern Frontier District, which I had just left, wells are few and far between, and the natives have serious difficulty in watering their stock properly during the dry season. On the Abyssinian side of the border, there is a plentiful supply of water throughout the year at innumerable places, and the country is admirably suited for cattle-breeding. Between Wujilli and the foot of the Arero highlands we passed through thick bush. I went on ahead of my camels by a path which wound

up the steep hillside to Arero. At the summit, over 5,000 feet above sea-level, a beautiful prospect, typical of the Abyssinian highlands, greeted my eyes. A vast forest, mainly of juniper trees, stretched before me, and in every glade flowering and creeping plants grew luxuriantly. On my arrival at Arero, Balambaras Waldi Gabriel, the officer in charge of the small Abyssinian outpost, turned out his soldiers as a guard of honour, and after entertaining me pitched his own tent for my use, as my caravan failed to put in an appearance that evening. The next day I presented my passports which were read by the officer's secretary. On seeing the seals of the two Abyssinian ministers, the whole assembly rose and bowed and remained standing while the contents of the passports were read. Waldi Gabriel, who had been in the south for many years, was a pleasant and plausible old man, and on our first meeting he certainly made me think he was a finer character than he really was. He was very anxious for me to meet Fitaurari Waldi, the Governor, and begged me to delay my departure till he arrived. I expect he wanted to keep me back, as it was quite on the cards that Waldi would blame him for letting me pass on before he himself had seen me. However, I declined to stay, and Waldi Gabriel lent me some camels, as mine were tired after the steep ascent to Arero. When I left, he accompanied me part of the way with his soldiery, and when I gave him a drink of whisky on the road, his servants held a white cloth round while he drank to counteract the effects of anyone who might have the evil eye. An Abyssinian chief always loves to be accompanied by a crowd of retainers, some at his side, some in front, and some behind. The greater the chief, the bigger the escort he has. Even a common soldier will nearly always have a slave running behind him carrying his rifle. I have often thought how trustful the master must be, for on some

of the lonely parts of a journey it would be easy for the slave to shoot him and decamp.

From Arero, I made an excursion to one of the highest points of the district (5,740 feet), ten miles to the south-west. The view from this point was most imposing. Away to the south-west, I could discern Mega Mountain, the place where I hoped to establish the Consulate for Southern Abyssinia. Towards the south-east, the rolling downs of the Dirri country stretched as far as the eye could reach.

We left Arero on 8th January, and in a few days struck the main route to Addis Ababa at Karayo, the headquarters of Fitaurari Gedu, the chief of one of the two big sections of the Boran tribes. Karayo, as I found out later, is the name given temporarily to the village in which Gedu lives. As he moves about at frequent intervals, confusion is apt to arise from this nomenclature, till one is used to it.

Soon afterwards we crossed the frontier between the provinces of Boran and Sidamo, and upon reaching the village of Kuku a short distance farther on, I sent my camels back and hired mules.

The hiring of pack-mules is not quite so simple a matter as it would seem. A *nagādei*, the Abyssinian term for a trader, naturally wishes to reap as much profit as he can from the European, who, he knows, has no other means of transport. Thus much haggling is entailed before the bargain is clinched. On this particular occasion I could only get the *nagādei* to take me as far as Alatta. He was a competent man and did his work well. When we reached Alatta, he dumped me down in the middle of the town and demanded payment. As it was late afternoon, I had perforce to spend the night in the town in an empty and extremely dirty house lent to me by some Greek traders. To make matters worse, some Abyssinians on their way home from a carouse took up a position close to the door and vomited at frequent intervals all through the

night. Since then I have practically never camped actually in a village, but have always pitched my tents some distance away. This method has decided sanitary advantages, and in addition one escapes being continually pestered by beggars with revolting sores.

At Alatta I was detained by the local Governor for a few days. The owner of the province at that time was Bitwaddad Haili Georgis, who as Minister for Foreign Affairs had issued one of my passes. Since then he had become Prime Minister, and the Governor insisted that in consequence I should have to get a fresh pass before proceeding. This argument was, of course, a mere pretext for obtaining a bribe—which I had no intention of giving. However, after several days' wrangling, he let me go. When I reported the incident, the Prime Minister had the fellow dismissed at once. The journey through Sidamo, with its wonderful mountains, forests, and valleys, was of surpassing beauty. The unexpected delay, however, compelled me to hasten on as quickly as possible. Through inexperience I was having some trouble in arranging my transport, and it was therefore not without relief that I reached Addis Ababa on 6th February.

Addis Ababa was founded by the Emperor Menelik in 1892, but with that its claims to modernity are exhausted. It is a large, straggling, ramshackle, and picturesque town, delightfully situated among groves of eucalyptus. Even the European buildings seem to acquire with remarkable rapidity the general air of decrepitude. Many of them are poorly built and only half-finished, and they are generally too close to native huts to be healthy or comfortable. In the town itself, perhaps the best of the European buildings is the Bank of Abyssinia, a substantial structure of stone. Of the native buildings the most notable is the cathedral of St. George. There is also an hotel established by the enterprise of the late Empress Taitu. On the outskirts are the European



THE POLO GROUND, ADDIS ABABA.



THE MARKET PLACE, ADDIS ABABA.

Legations. The British Legation, which is really more like an English country house than an official residence, lies snugly tucked away in the fold of a hill, surrounded by a delightful garden and approached through an avenue of trees. Since the railway, from the port of Jibuti in French Somaliland, was extended to Addis Ababa in 1917, European influences have tended to increase, but the town still remains innocent of any system of sanitation, although it has a population of more than 50,000. Nor has the Abyssinian Government yet learnt how to make roads; in consequence wheeled transport can only be used with difficulty, and practically not at all during the rainy season from June to September.¹

The chief amusement of the European colony is polo. There is a turf ground with a good pavilion on the racecourse, where the game is played twice a week except in the rainy season. At the end of the dry season innumerable cracks appear in the ground and affect the game even of the local 'stars'. The ponies are small but good, and very easily trained. I have known ponies bought and played almost at once. They have good mouths, which is probably accounted for by the very severe bits the Abyssinians use. Besides polo, lawn tennis is popular, but up to the present neither game has found favour with the Abyssinians.

During the three months which I spent in Addis Ababa, I was busily employed in calling upon the Legations and the various Abyssinian officials, making preparations for my journey to the south, and gaining some knowledge of the intricacies of local politics. But before going any further, I must say something about Abyssinia and its people in general.²

¹ Roads are now being extended throughout the town, and some 70 motor-cars use them to the peril of riders and pedestrians.

² Leonard Woolf, *Empire and Commerce in Africa*, Part II, Chapter V, pp. 138-227 (London, 1920), gives an adequate summary of early Abyssinian history and describes with graphic detail the story of Abyssinia's relations with the modern European Powers.

At the outset, there are two facts which it would be impossible to over-emphasise. The first is that Abyssinia is the sole remaining instance in Africa of a purely indigenous independent State. The second is that the Abyssinians are and always have been an essentially warlike and 'imperialist' people, and that even to-day they are the rulers of an Empire of which they form hardly one-third of the population. The name 'Habash'—our Abyssinia—is derived from an Arabic word meaning 'confusion', the reference being to its mixed races.

For my present purpose the only event in ancient Ethiopian history which need be mentioned is the conversion of the country to Christianity. According to tradition, this was accomplished by one Frumentius about the year 330. In the following century, the monastic movement was introduced from Egypt, and as a result the Abyssinian Church became, as it has remained to this day, Monophysite. The Abyssinian Church still receives its *Abuna* or spiritual head from the Coptic Church of Egypt. With the rise of Islam in the seventh century, Abyssinia was soon isolated from the Christian world, but the new religion never secured a permanent footing among the Abyssinians themselves in spite of its success among their neighbours. In the middle of the sixteenth century, the Jesuits attempted to convert the country to Roman Catholicism, but the old faith proved too strong and all Jesuit missionaries were expelled in 1633. Thus, in religious matters, the Abyssinians have more than once displayed a very stubborn and tenacious conservatism. This same characteristic, as will be seen in the sequel, very largely determined their reaction to modern European civilisation.

Abyssinia, as it exists to-day, is almost entirely the work of two men, the Emperors Theodore and Menelik. Until the rise of Theodore, the country was

ruled by petty local chiefs who owed but a shadowy suzerainty to the *Negus* or king. Theodore himself was the son of a chief in the west of Amhara. A successful revolt and a fortunate marriage with the daughter of his enemy enabled him to have himself crowned emperor in 1855. Theodore was a militant Christian and a sincere reformer, and his reign is strangely reminiscent of the best days of the medieval Holy Roman Empire. He got rid of the local chiefs by fair means and foul, and substituted military governors of his own choosing. He is said to have tried to suppress the slave trade and to have abolished the punishment of murderers by the family of the victim. He instituted military pay instead of licensed plunder, and carried out notable reforms in the collection of tolls on commerce. Soon after his coronation he conquered Shoa, and carried off into captivity at Magdala the young son of the Shoan chief, the future emperor Menelik. This success only added to the number of his enemies and the seriousness of his burdens. After the death in 1860 of his two best advisers, two Englishmen named Plowden and Bell, plots and rebellions against him became more frequent than before, but the final tragedy did not come till eight years later, when Napier's expedition, despatched to obtain the release of Europeans imprisoned by the Emperor, stormed Magdala and discovered Theodore within the gates dead by his own hand.

A certain Ras Kasa, who had assisted Napier's force and received in return a useful present of arms and munitions, ventured to assume the imperial purple in 1872 as John II, and gradually brought most of Theodore's old dominions under his sway. He lost to Muhammad Ali, but later recovered, the provinces of Bogos, Gojjam, and Shoa. Meanwhile, the Italians had established themselves in Eritrea, and, finding that the coast region did not come up to

their expectations, began to push into the interior. They soon came into contact and conflict with the Abyssinians, and even in those days the advantage was not always with the Europeans. John, however, died in battle in 1889, fighting the Dervishes at Galabat, before the issues between his country and Italy had reached a crisis.

Menelik, ruler of Shoa, at once declared himself emperor, and, as he disposed of some 5,000 rifles, presented to him by the Italians as an inducement to rebel against the dead emperor, other aspirants to the imperial dignity had little compunction in dissimulating their ambitions. Italy naturally assumed that, with her own client on the throne, she would have little difficulty in gradually bringing the whole country under her direct control. Her next step was the conclusion of a treaty with Menelik in which the latter consented 'to employ the government of his Majesty the King of Italy in treating of all matters that may arise with other Powers and Governments'. The Italian protectorate implied in this clause was formally notified by Italy to other Powers on 11th October, 1889. Italy, however, soon discovered that she had overreached herself, and that Menelik was determined to maintain the independence of Abyssinia. The protectorate clause in the treaty of Ucciali was almost immediately denounced by Menelik, who was able to point out that in the Amharic version the form of the clause was merely permissive. The responsibility for the discrepancy was never conclusively proved. The Italians next began to support a rival to Menelik, but in accordance with their treaty they continued to supply Menelik himself, who was also obtaining military stores from France and Russia. Thus, in 1893, Menelik felt strong enough to denounce the treaty of Ucciali in its entirety. War with Italy followed in 1895, and on 1st March, 1896, at Aduwa, an Italian

force of 14,500 men was routed with the loss of 4,000 killed, 2,000 prisoners, and all its artillery. By a treaty of peace signed at Addis Ababa in October of the same year, the treaty of Ucciali was annulled, and the independence of Abyssinia recognised.

The war with Italy was an important factor in opening up Abyssinia to European influences. Russia sent a mission to Menelik in 1896, and in the following year both France and Britain followed suit. France obtained a concession for a railway from Jibuti to the White Nile, but political and financial difficulties delayed the execution of the project. The question was not definitely settled till 1906, when Britain, France, and Italy agreed that the French company should complete the line to Addis Ababa, and that, in the future, lines from that point should be built by the British to the Sudan, and by the Italians to Eritrea or Italian Somaliland.

Meanwhile, Menelik enlarged his dominions by conquering neighbouring tribes, one of the most important of which was the Boran Galla to the south. This did not offer much difficulty to the warlike Abyssinians armed with rifles, as the tribes in the south were only armed with spears, and were therefore practically at their mercy.

In 1910, Menelik, now an old man, was stricken with paralysis and compelled to relinquish the reins of office. Ras Tasamma was appointed Regent and Menelik's grandson, Lij Yasu, was nominated to succeed to the throne upon the death of the Emperor. The Abyssinians like other primitive peoples have little idea of political continuity, and the disappearance of a ruler is almost always followed by a period of greater or less chaos. The regency had first to contend with a usurpation by the Empress Taitu, and it had scarcely survived the onslaught of that vigorous old lady before it had to deal with another threat of revolution, provoked by Lij Yasu's attempt

to make himself supreme on the death of the Regent. The second danger was only averted by the intervention of Fitaurari Hapta Georgis and the *Abuna*, who induced Lij Yasu to accept a counsellor instead of a regent.

I find that I have been mentioning Fitauraris and Rases as though they were as familiar to the reader as Dukes and Earls. I had better explain that these are simply Abyssinian titles. The Emperor is the *Negusa Nagast* or King of Kings. The highest ranks beneath the Emperor are *Negus* (king) and *Ras* (head), which are only borne by a few of the highest officials in the land. The military titles next in precedence which I shall have frequent occasion to use are :

Dajazmach, general ;

Fitaurari, commander of the advance guard ;

Kanyazmach, commander of the right wing ;

Gerazmach, commander of the left wing.

Into the intricacies of court, judicial, and ecclesiastical titles there is fortunately no need for me to penetrate. I may mention that *Ato* is the general courtesy title like the English Mr., and that *Waizaro* is the corresponding title for a woman. *Lij* is a courtesy title, meaning 'boy', given to the sons of important people and often retained by them long after reaching years of discretion.

The racial, religious, and linguistic divisions of the Near East, which appear to have been troubling the European Powers considerably in the last few years, are simplicity itself compared with the same problems in Abyssinia. To begin with the races, the aboriginal population was negro, and more or less pure remnants of negroid tribes are to be found at the bottom of the social scale everywhere, although they are most numerous in the west and south-west. The Abyssinian word for these people, *Shanqalla*, is practically



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LETTER AND SEAL OF THE EMPEROR MENELIK.

equivalent to slave. Many thousands of years before the Christian era, the negro race was ousted from north-eastern Africa by the so-called Hamitic race. Cushite is the name given to the branch which occupied the Abyssinian plateau. This was the stock from which the bulk of the Abyssinian population is derived. At a later date, there were Semitic immigrations, not on a scale to cause any change in the physical character of the people, yet sufficient to leave indelible effects upon language and customs. The Abyssinians proper have, in fact, been described as 'Semitised Cushites'. The Gallas, who predominate throughout Southern Abyssinia, are of Hamitic origin, but have not been affected by Semitic influences. It is extremely difficult to give an intelligible account of the physical differences between the Abyssinian and the Galla, because by now, owing to intermarriage, many Abyssinian families have nearly as much Galla blood in them as the Gallas themselves. Again, the Gallas in the south, who live chiefly on milk, are quite different in appearance from, say, the Wallaga or Arusi Gallas. The Abyssinians are generally slim and of medium height. They have a refined and more or less European type of face, thick lips and flattened nostrils being conspicuous by their absence in the pure type. Owing to the hard life they lead in the mountains, they are active and very hardy. They either shave their heads or let their hair grow to about an inch in length. Some of the younger men, and hunters, and most of the brigands, let it grow till it resembles a mop.

When we pass to the religions of Abyssinia, we find still greater complexity. Christianity, Islam, and paganism are all represented, while one small tribe in the north, the Falasha, is Jewish by religion, though Hamitic by race. Monophysite Christianity is the official religion of the country, and in the course of their conquests the Abyssinians are said in some

cases to have attempted to force it upon their victims. This kind of conversion is notoriously short-lived, and Islam and paganism fully hold their own. I must say that in my experience I have never known the Abyssinians, although they are fanatical Christians, try to force their religion upon anyone, or to show any aggressive tendencies to those who have different beliefs from their own. They will, of course, not eat meat killed by a Moslem, nor eat out of the same pot if Moslem meat has been in it, but then the same applies to the Moslem. I have on several occasions seen Christians and Moslems eating bread together. Islam predominates on the north-eastern frontier and in the semi-independent province of Jimma. There has been some infiltration of Muhammedanism in certain other parts of the Galla country, besides Jimma; but in general the Galla are still pagan, at any rate in the south where I spent most of my time.

Language introduces fresh complications for the stranger in Abyssinia. It is said that there are seventy separate languages and about two hundred different dialects, but of these less than half a dozen have any practical importance. The language of Abyssinia two hundred years ago was Ge'ez, and this is still used by the Abyssinian Church, although for current use it has been supplanted by Amharic, the tongue originally spoken in Amhara, Shoa, and Gojjam. Under the Shoan ascendancy Amharic has become the official language of the empire. Tigrinya, the dialect spoken in the northern province called Tigre, is the modern representative of Ge'ez. In the south, Galla (or Oromo) is generally spoken, except of course by the Abyssinian officials and garrisons when talking among themselves. Practically all Abyssinians speak Galla, and they use it when talking to the natives. In order to be able to converse with Abyssinians and also with the Gallas, I had been ordered to learn this language, and many a worrying hour the process

gave me. There are great arguments as to which is the more difficult to learn and which is the more useful. As to the former, there is no doubt in my own mind that Amharic is more difficult. Its verbs and grammar are more complicated, and it is not an easy language to pronounce. Galla, on the other hand, is not very difficult to pronounce, resembling in some ways Italian, and its grammar and verbs are certainly easier. About their relative utility opinions differ. Probably, if one lived in Addis Ababa, Amharic would be the more useful. But for the traveller who wishes to be independent of interpreters, Galla is preferable, since the Abyssinians themselves are practically bi-lingual, while most of the subject races speak Galla and do not understand Amharic. At that we must leave it, letting each person decide for himself. As a pastime, Walker, the Consul in the West, and myself devoted many years to the compilation of a Galla grammar, which I hope may be of use to others who are compelled to learn the language.¹ It is a curious fact that, although so many of the great Abyssinian officers are pure Gallas, and although nearly every Abyssinian knows Galla as well as Amharic, yet they do not care to speak Galla in public. This can only be ascribed to a kind of false pride, as in private they will talk it readily.

Traditions stretching back to the days of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, and in more recent and less doubtful times a history just as glorious and just as shameful as that of any other people, reinforce the influence of race, religion, and language in the making of modern Abyssinia. From national myths to 'sacred egoism', almost every feature which is common to the countries of the self-styled civilised world has its parallel here. But the Abyssinian does not need to know this in order to feel that his country has

¹ Arnold W. Hodson and Craven H. Walker, *An Elementary and Practical Grammar of the Galla or Oromo Language* (London, 1922).

just as good a title to independence and self-government to-day as it had before the white man occupied all the surrounding territory. If the existence of Abyssinia has to be defended, he is fully prepared to fight, and the memory of Aduwa gives him confidence in the issue. Experience has led him to believe that the white man has come for his own and not for Abyssinia's good, and that an all-embracing suspicion of the white man's activities is justifiable and necessary if his country is to maintain its independence. This trait in his character one can but admire and sympathise with.

The white traveller or official who comes to Abyssinia with any experience of the parts of Africa under European administration is bound to find the contrast startling. Elsewhere the white man is top dog. He runs the country politically and economically. His treatment of the natives may be good, bad, or indifferent; but in any case he is the ruler, and the natives accept the fact as they accept the weather. In Abyssinia the position is exactly the reverse. The country still belongs to the brown-skinned man, and the white man is admitted only on sufferance. All power, civil and military, all the machinery of government and administration, are in the hands of the natives. There are not even foreign technical experts—financial advisers or military missions—to influence or control the powers that be. In fact, the white man in Abyssinia is in much the same position as any representative of the foreign bourgeoisie in Soviet Russia. Before he can understand the life and mentality of the people, he must undergo a mental revolution.

CHAPTER II

FIRST JOURNEY SOUTH

My post and its duties—first journey south—through Kambata, Walamo, Baroda, and Gamo to Gardula—strange carvings—customs gates—interview with Fitaurari Waldi.

AFTER the abdication of the Emperor Menelik in 1910 Abyssinia tended to sink back into a state of anarchy. Lij Yasu was not of the stamp of Theodore or Menelik. He was a man of weak character, whose devotion to Venus and Bacchus left him little energy to cope with the tasks of government. That he was not without brains is proved by the schemes which led to his downfall in 1916. The real pillar of the country was Fitaurari Hapta Georgis, Minister for War, who was one of Menelik's old generals and the embodiment of the proud traditions of Abyssinia's independence. As Hapta Georgis was the owner of the province of Boran in the south where I was to act as British Consul, I had many dealings with him both during my stay in Addis Ababa in the spring of 1915 and in the following years, and I quickly learnt to respect his staunch conservatism which was proof against all modern ideas and innovations. If he ever visits England, he will find congenial company on the benches of the House of Lords, or, should that historic institution no longer be in existence, among the heads of colleges at Oxford and Cambridge.

The consent of the Abyssinian Government to the appointment of a British Consul for the south had not been obtained without difficulty. The

proposal, it was suspected, covered some design or other upon Abyssinian territory, whereas in point of fact its aim was rather to maintain the *status quo* by providing a stimulus to the Abyssinian authorities to keep order on their southern frontier. Since 1910 the inroads of poachers and raiders from Abyssinia into the East Africa Protectorate had become more and more frequent, and had made life intolerable both for the natives, who were robbed of their cattle and often murdered into the bargain, and for the administration, which could obtain neither restitution nor reform from the Abyssinian authorities, and could not even deal with the raiders effectively owing to lack of information from the other side of the frontier. Raids were constantly occurring, for the elephants are a great attraction. The ivory itself is of course valuable, but in addition to this the man who shoots an elephant, a rhinoceros, a lion, or a giraffe may wear earrings as evidence of his prowess. The Abyssinians do not care to hunt elephants except in large parties; consequently, when they make these poaching forays, they come in force.

Moreover, there was good reason to believe that the local Abyssinian authorities themselves did not scruple to take a hand in the poaching business, though they strongly objected to people's coming from other provinces for that purpose. There is a story that, on one occasion, soon after Hapta Georgis had sent down specially strong orders upon this subject, some of his officers found a party of elephant hunters asleep one night. They approached them by stealth and killed them all while they were sleeping. Upon searching the bodies, they found that the men they had killed had permission under the seal of the Emperor Menelik to hunt elephants. What happened to the officers when their mistake was discovered, the story does not tell. Perhaps they were never found out,

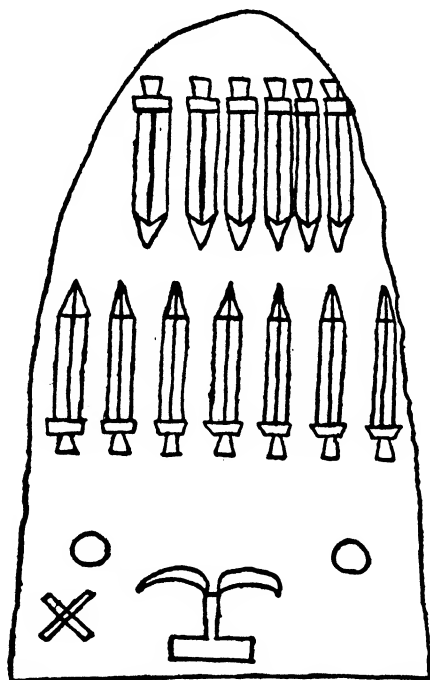
or perhaps this is only one of the tales that are told to travellers—for them to re-tell.

The situation was brought to a head by an incident which occurred in 1913. While out on patrol one day, Captain Aylmer chanced upon a party of elephant hunters poaching on British territory. He had only a handful of men with him, but with great gallantry he led an attack upon a much stronger force. He was shot dead, and his body was buried at the time close to Gaddaduma, but was later re-interred at Moyale.

As a result of this deplorable incident, pressure was brought to bear upon the Abyssinian Government to agree to the appointment of a British Consul, who would be able to report the presence of raiders both to the Abyssinian authorities and to the officers of the Northern Frontier District (East Africa Protectorate) before they actually crossed into British territory, and also to collect evidence promptly of any raid that did occur. Thus the appointment was in a sense political rather than commercial, but the usual duties of a consul in facilitating trade were by no means excluded. It was desired, for example, to ensure the supply of grain for Moyale, and to encourage the trade in cattle, mules, coffee, and other commodities between Abyssinia and East Africa. In addition, the contraband traffic in arms and ammunition was to be watched, and every effort made to induce the local Abyssinian authorities to arrest and punish gun-runners.

Such, in brief, was the program of duties which I had before me when at length I set out from Addis Ababa for the south on 31st May, 1915. My caravan consisted of 40 pack-mules, 10 donkeys, 10 riding mules, and 4 horses, and our camp contained 15 tents. A large and well-equipped caravan like this is the nearest approach to *trains-de-luxe* that Abyssinia offers. I had some trouble in getting my

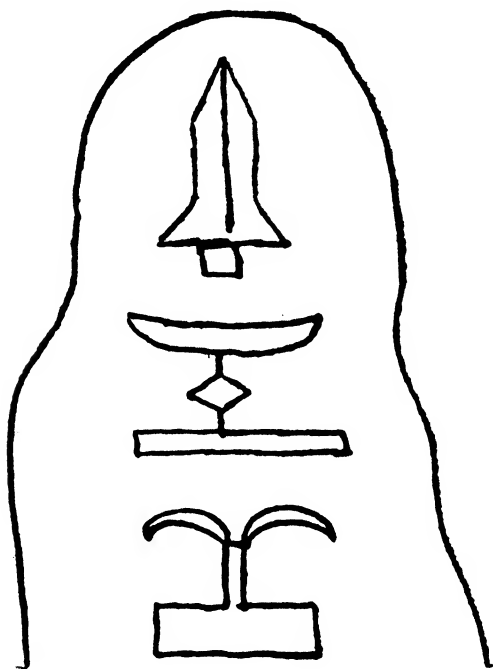
interpreter away from the capital, as he was wanted for some civil case or other. When we were two days out, an officer appeared and tried to arrest the fellow, saying that he had orders from the Chief Justice to do so. I told him, more or less politely, that I would not consent to this unless he could produce a sealed order, after which I saw him no



more. I followed the main road, or rather track, by which I had come to Addis Ababa, as far as Urbarak, where I branched off to the west through the provinces of Kambata, Walamo, Baroda, and Gamo.

Shortly after crossing the Leman River, on the top of a hill, close to a conspicuously large tree, I came upon a number of stones with curious carvings.

The biggest stone, which was about six feet in height, had one row at the top of symbols like the blade of a short straight dagger, without the hilt, pointing downward. Underneath this was a second row with the points upwards, while round the foot of the stone were a number of other devices, including circles and crosses. A second stone had on it some of these



symbols with one or two additional ones. In addition, there were several other stones carved with the same symbols in different variations. All these stones have evidently been conveyed to their present positions by man, but when or with what object I was unable to discover. They are reputed to be of great antiquity, and local legend has it that treasure is buried underneath them. My own im-

pression is that they are grave-stones marking the burial place of some important person or persons of a remote age; but the significance of the symbols remains a mystery.

Passing through Kambata, I noticed one day hundreds of people enclosed in a high stockade with Abyssinian soldiers on guard all round it. Naturally I was interested and made inquiries. A murder, it appeared, had been committed in the district, and the Abyssinian officials could not discover the criminal. In such cases they round up the whole population of the district and shut them inside a stockade. They give them plenty of food and water, but keep them imprisoned day and night. Under these conditions it is not long before the murderer is discovered. Indeed, the method is said to be almost infallible.

Kambata was then under Dajazmach Waldi Gabriel. The inhabitants speak a language of their own, one of the non-Semitised dialects of Cushite origin. I found it very difficult to get reliable information about the names of any but the most conspicuous mountains. On my map was a mountain called Ambericho, which I wished to locate, but every mountain I pointed to they said was Ambericho. I thought this peculiar, until it dawned on me that Ambericho was the Kambata word for mountain.

The natives of Walamo speak yet another language. This is one of the provinces divided up among many chiefs, which the Abyssinians call *Madbeit*, i.e., kitchen. At this time, Afa Negus Telahun had one thousand tenants there, while the rest of the district was divided among forty-four officers. The head of the 'kitchen' was Kanyazmach Damte, who was the chief civil, military, and judicial authority rolled into one, a veritable Pooh-Bah. His headquarters were at a considerable town situated at the foot of Mount Dalbu, which is 9,680 feet in height. I climbed to the top of this mountain and possessed my soul in

patience for several hours till the clouds rolled away and I could enjoy the view. There were numerous picturesque little villages dotted over the slopes, where large quantities of a plant called *warke* grow, the roots of which are used to make a kind of flour. According to the natives, there was a great famine in Abyssinia many years ago ; all the crops failed except this plant, which alone saved the people from complete starvation. Thereafter, the plant was called *warke*, which is the native word for gold.

At intervals along all the main tracks are customs gates, and in charge of these gates are keepers who take toll from people passing through. How this hampers internal trade may be gathered from the fact that dues are levied at six or eight different customs gates between Sidamo and Addis Ababa. One of the gate-keepers in Walamo tried to stop me. He demanded my passports, and upon receiving them said they were no good. When I pointed out to him that he did not know what he was talking about because he had been holding the passes upside down while pretending to read them, he became furious and refused to let me go on. As I had a fairly large and well-armed body of men with me, I calculated that the gate-keeper would be afraid to use force. I asked for my passports back, but he refused to restore them, hoping thereby to compel me to remain. I told him, however, that if he insisted upon keeping them he could do so, but that they had been given to me by the Abyssinian Ministers in Addis Ababa and he would get into serious trouble if he kept them. With this, I passed on, much to his surprise, leaving the passports in his hand. We went on till we reached the camping ground for the night, and after a short time, as I had expected, the delinquent official came up at full speed to restore my passes with profuse apologies. He had evidently been told by the people who had read the passes that they bore

the seals of the high Ministers in Addis Ababa, and this had scared him. I soon discovered that the best plan on approaching a customs gate was to send forward my headman to the gate-keeper with a polite message, and a small sum of money. This usually works the oracle, but if you suddenly appear on the scene and give no present, trouble follows more often than not.

The inhabitants of Walamo formerly had the unpleasant custom of burying a living person with the body of anyone of high rank who had died. It is commonly reported that when the late queen died, three women were buried alive with her, one to make her bed, one to make her coffee, and one to light her pipe. This barbarous practice, I believe, is now dying out. Another curious custom which I noticed in Walamo was the tying of a piece of cotton round a tree. This, it appears, is done to bring good luck—for example, by a man who wishes his wife to present him with a son.

After passing through Walamo, I entered Baroda, which was then under Likamakwas Hapta Michael. I called upon this chief to pay my respects, and was very well received. When an Abyssinian chief receives you he sends out an *agaḥāri* to meet you. An *agaḥāri* is a member of his household, more or less equivalent in position to the English butler. The *agaḥāri*, with a military escort, comes up to your mule and bows very low. He then accompanies you to the chief's house, outside which are the soldiery, drawn up in two long lines. The number of the soldiers depends upon the status of the chief you are visiting or upon the amount of respect he wishes to show you. There is no saluting in the Abyssinian army, but as you pass up the line the soldiers all bow. At the head of the line, quite close to the house, will be the chief himself. He comes forward as you approach and shakes you by the hand, asking



CHILDREN IN KAMBATA.



very politely how you are and how your family and friends are, to which courtesies you reply with similar conventional inquiries. In Addis Ababa, the great chiefs, as a rule, follow the European custom and receive their guests indoors, but in the provinces this would be considered rudeness almost amounting to insult. Indeed, the more a chief wishes to honour you in the country the farther he comes from his house to meet you.

The Likamakwas was a charming man, with polished and courteous manners. While in Baroda, I was solemnly assured that the Germans had taken Nairobi and were about to enter the Boran country. The Likamakwas asked me whether the rumour was true, adding that a large body of troops had been sent to defend the border against the Germans. I was able to reassure him by pointing out that I myself had recently come from Nairobi and had passed through Boran to the east of the great chain of lakes on my way to Addis Ababa without hearing of a single German. Repercussions of the European upheaval had already reached this out-of-the-way part of the world, and had caused a general feeling of uneasiness. German and Turkish propaganda agents spared no pains to spread rumours to their own advantage. I took with me on this journey copies of pamphlets in Amharic, prepared by the Legation and setting forth the origins of the War and the reasons for Britain's entering it. These I distributed to the different chiefs, who were very pleased to have them.

The districts of Kambata, Walamo, and Baroda are extraordinarily fertile and productive, but enormous areas are left uncultivated on account of the exactions of the Abyssinians. A tax of one-tenth is levied on all produce, and this inevitably tends to prevent the people from growing more than is essential for themselves. With a just and stable adminis-

tration, the total production of this part of Abyssinia could be increased many times over. The climate is altogether delightful, and although I made this journey during the beginning of the rainy season, the road was not bad, judged by Abyssinian standards.

From Baroda, owing to the extremely hilly nature of the country, I decided to turn down to Lake Margherita and to travel along its shores. The Likamakwas did his best to dissuade me, telling me that the country below was most unhealthy and that all men and animals would die, but I disregarded his warnings. The descent was exceedingly steep, from 7,000 to 4,100 feet in an almost straight drop. The country by the lake is very fertile, and I did not find it unhealthy at this time of the year (June). The mosquitoes were bad in places, and I have since found out that, immediately after the rains, the district is extremely unhealthy, both malaria and animal sickness being prevalent. Large quantities of cotton are grown by the lake, and I passed strings of donkeys loaded with this commodity. The bulk of the cotton is beautifully woven in the neighbouring districts by primitive methods into shawls and blankets. Close to the shore of the lake were several native villages, but there were no Abyssinians. The latter, indeed, always avoid the lowlands, and even my guide had insisted on going round by the mountain road. This guide had been given me by the Minister for War, and he had proved a very decent fellow. On the road he often told me how much he loved me. Next to his wife and his father, I was his greatest friend; he would never leave me till I had reached my destination; and he would gladly lay down his life for me at any time. When he heard that we were going down to the lowlands by the lakes, he was very disturbed and did his utmost to dissuade me. Upon realising that he could not do so, he suddenly remembered that he had an important engagement,



WALAMO NATIVES WEAVING.



CANOE ON LAKE MARGHERITA.

which necessitated his going by the mountain route and joining us farther on. On the whole I agree in preferring the mountains, but the Abyssinians go to extremes. Again and again, one comes upon beautiful mountain ranges with admirable sites for villages half way up. Yet five times out of six, the Abyssinian will prefer to climb to the very topmost point, and there, away from timber, among the clouds and mists, he will build his village. Partly because the villages are on the mountains, and partly because the valleys are often simply deep ravines, almost impassable in the rainy season, the Abyssinians make their roads as far as possible along the ridges, descending into the valleys only when there is no alternative.

Lake Margherita is fed by swift streams from the heights of Baroda and Gamo. There are several islands scattered about, the largest of which is inhabited by a distinct tribe called Aruro. I went out fishing in one of their boats, which were quite unlike any other kind of boat I had seen. The bows are shaped rather like a Venetian gondola, and the stern is open. The bottom and sides are riveted together with wooden pegs, and the water comes in at the stern and through the interstices. Thus the boat floats, not through being watertight, but owing to the extreme lightness of the wood from which it is made. These boats vary in size, and some are large enough to take several mules and their owners from one side of the lake to the other.

A little farther on, we crossed the Kulufa River, which runs into Lake Chamo. Just before it enters the lake, the stream is deep and rapid and teems with crocodiles. At this point, there was a primitive bridge, consisting simply of a tree felled close to the bank so as to fall across the stream. The local natives run along the slippery trunk like monkeys, but I confess to making the crossing myself with some trepidation. The crocodiles were swimming about

lazily but (as it seemed to me) expectantly underneath, and I had painful visions of the consequences of one false step. The natives assured me that the crocodiles were always there, as people did sometimes fall in. Recently, I was told, the reptiles had become so bold as to seize small children sent down to water cattle, and it had been found necessary to make a zareba of thorns in the water to protect the stock when watering. Fishing at the mouth of the Kulufa River was great fun. One caught fish almost as rapidly as one could bait the hook. The commonest kind was barbel, some of which grew to an enormous size and were excellent eating. The best bait was raw meat, and any tackle seemed to do, provided it was strong enough. When one tired of fishing one could pass the time by shooting a crocodile or two. This is more of a duty than a pleasure, for it is a gruesome sight to watch those one kills being devoured by their kin. I was amazed to find that the natives refuse to eat fish. They are inordinately fond of hippopotamus, however, and were constantly worrying me to shoot one for them.

To the south of Lake Margherita and separated from it by a narrow strip of land called the 'Bridge of God' lies Lake Chamo. How the name Chamo came to be associated with it puzzled me for a long time. Both lakes are known to the natives as Abaya, while the tribes living on the islands in the more southerly lake call it Bagade. Both these words, however, are generic terms meaning 'great water'. Not till several years later did I discover that the name of Chamo was used by one small tribe, called Burji, living at the south-east corner. The water of Lake Chamo is much clearer than that of Lake Margherita. Seen from the tops of the neighbouring mountains, it is wonderfully beautiful; but from its shores it has a rather forbidding and desolate aspect on account of numerous withered trees which



PACK-MULES CROSSING KULUFA RIVER.



PACK-MULES CROSSING KULUFA RIVER.

are seen standing out of the water close to the shore. The lake appears to have increased in volume during recent years, and these former lords of the forest have succumbed to the water. Along the shore, however, there are at intervals stretches of beautiful green turf, which is a great joy to the pack-mules after the hard going on the mountain tracks. In the neighbourhood of the lake, ducks and geese abound, and there are in addition buffalo, water-buck, bush-buck, and hartebeeste in plenty, as well as some lions and leopards. The lake-dwelling tribes were most friendly and obliging; if you gave them a few yards of cloth they would be your friends for life, but I never had occasion to put their protestations to any serious test. As a greeting they kiss the outside of your hand and then turn it over and kiss the inside.

From the head of Lake Chamo there are two routes to the south. The more direct and, in the healthy season, the better route skirts the shore of the lake. The alternative is to climb into the highlands of Gamo on the west and go over the mountains to Gardula. The latter was the route which I took on this occasion, as I wished to call upon Fitaurari Walidi, the Governor of Boran, whose headquarters were at Gardula. Accordingly, after passing through a small forest belt of magnificent timber containing some untouched rubber, I turned west, and began the long, steep climb to the highlands. From the top, over 8,000 feet above sea-level, the views of the lakes were wonderful and impressive. One morning I saw the sun rise. The amphitheatre which encloses the lakes was full of clouds, but all above the sky was limpid. Then, as the sun climbed higher, the clouds began to clear, and the rays, reaching the surface of the water through the breaks, were reflected with a shimmering splendour to the heights on which I stood.

On 4th July I arrived at Gardula, having lost only two mules in the course of a journey of 320 odd miles. Three days before, I had sent on the guide (who had now rejoined my party) with a polite letter for Fitaurari Waldi saying that I wished to pay my respects and was much looking forward to meeting him. Upon reaching Gardula, I was informed that the Fitaurari was not there, but was at a place called Machele, about four hours away. I was also told that he was sick, but I discovered afterwards that this was merely a political indisposition. However, Ato Gidi, the judge at Gardula, received me well, returned my visit, and sent food. During our conversation, he remarked that he knew why Germany and Britain were fighting. I expressed a deferential interest in his views, and he went on 'Because they both want to rule Abyssinia.' He next asked why, if the British were such a great nation, they had asked Abyssinia to help them. To this question and many others I succeeded, with the help of my interpreter, in returning satisfactory answers.

The day after my arrival at Gardula, accompanied by Ato Gidi, I went to call on Fitaurari Waldi, who had been Governor of Boran for Hapta Georgis for many years. After four hours' walk over a very bad road, we came to his house, which was a miserable place with some uncouth soldiers lounging about outside, who did not bow or pay any of the customary compliments upon such an occasion. The Fitaurari did not come out but met me inside the house. At once my suspicions that something must be wrong were confirmed. I put on my most charming manners and did everything I could to thaw him. The process took some time, and I had difficulty in keeping my temper, but eventually he condescended to talk with me. He began by explaining that he had been unable to make an effort to receive me because Fitaurari Hapta Georgis had not informed him of my coming,

and that until he received a letter from him he could do nothing. I pointed out that I had the necessary passes in my box and would shew them to him. To this, very eagerly: 'Have you a letter addressed to me personally?' I replied 'No', and he seemed very disappointed. He next asked what I was intending to do in the south, and I told him exactly what my duties were. Meanwhile, I had become ravenously hungry, for I had dispensed with breakfast in expectation of the profuse hospitality which had hitherto been my experience of visits to Abyssinian chiefs. Imagine my feelings when Fitaaurari Waldi brought the interview to a close with an apology for not offering me anything to eat as he had not had time to prepare European food. And there was worse to come, for to get back to my camp I had to go down the most impossible road I had ever seen. In places it was sheer precipice with holes cut for one's feet. Ato Gidi, a portly gentleman accustomed to good living, gave in half way, and had to be escorted down the precipice by one man in front and another behind. However, we both got down safely and duly made up for the meals which we had missed.

After a day's shooting, I toiled up the steep path once more with my passes. The same inhospitable reception awaited me. But by dint of telling Fitaaurari Waldi how anxious I was to work amicably with him, and generally behaving in a manner that would have thawed an iceberg, I finally succeeded in getting him to discuss the position with me. He had the decency to say how sorry he was that he had not received me better. It was all the fault of the Ministers in Addis Ababa who had not troubled to write to him about me; if they had written, everything would have been all right. After he had gone on in this strain for some time, I presented the pass which I had received from the Abyssinian Government to the effect that I was going to Moyale or the town

where Fitaurari Waldi was living. The pass having been read, our interview continued more or less in this style :

Fitaurari Waldi : ' This only gives you permission to stay at Moyale.'

Myself : ' Or whatever place you make your headquarters. If you stop at Moyale, I shall of course make my own headquarters there ; but the pass quite definitely says "at whatever place you are".'

Fitaurari Waldi (several times over) : ' But it only says Moyale.' (Then tiring of the phrase) ' This pass doesn't say anything about your travelling.'

Myself (firmly) : ' I have been appointed Consul for Southern Abyssinia, which of course carries with it the right of travelling. The whole matter has been discussed and settled with Fitaurari Hapta Georgis, the Minister for War. The idea is that I should help you by trying to settle all disputes on the border. I have to visit all the different chiefs and make friends with them, and I can't do this without travelling.'

Fitaurari Waldi : ' All this worry has happened because the Ministers didn't write to me. There would be no difficulty if they had told me all about your coming down here.'

Myself : ' I am sorry that you are worried, but I have my orders and must carry them out. I am going on to Moyale, and then I shall go along the Abyssinian side of the border so that I shall have first-hand knowledge of any place that may be mentioned in the future.'

Fitaurari Waldi (grudgingly) : ' I suppose it is necessary for you to get to know the border country, but that is not mentioned in the pass, and until it is you can't travel.'

Myself : ' The pass doesn't say that I may eat or drink, but I presume I may do so when I get the opportunity.'

Fitaurari Waldi (not seeing the joke): 'I shan't try to stop that. I'll send off a man at once to Fitaurari Hapta Georgis and ask him what the pass means. I must know whether you may stay at any place where I may be, and whether you may travel about.'

Myself: 'But the Fitaurari has already agreed to those points.'

Fitaurari Waldi: 'Well, the pass doesn't say so, and besides he hasn't told me anything about it. He should have written to me personally, and then there would have been no trouble. When I get the reply from Fitaurari Hapta Georgis, I shall be delighted to have you with me and will do everything I can to help you. But you must understand that it's the fault of the Ministers in Addis Ababa for not writing to me.'

I had had enough of his parrot-like rigmarole and saw that I could get no more out of him for the present. So I wished him good-bye and returned to my camp, the position being strained and uncomfortable. He had, in addition, irritated me by refusing to accept a beautiful sporting rifle I had brought down with me. (Incidentally, he tried some years afterwards to get it, but without success.) Thus ended the first round between us, the points more or less even. The contest continued for several years with varying fortunes, but in the end he took the full count and retired.

Fitaurari Waldi had a 'presence' and was a fine man to look at. Physically he was hard as nails, and was credited with tiring out his men and mules on journeys by the pace at which he travelled. He was apt to fly into violent passions on very slight provocation, and latterly he became subject to fits, probably epileptic, and used to fall on the ground and foam. Like most Abyssinian officials, he hated all foreigners, and loathed the idea of having a European official

stationed in his country. Through his fearlessness and strength of character he was one of the few men in the south who could keep their subordinates in order. Waldi's underlings all lived in mortal terror of him.

Local rumour had it that Hapta Georgis was angry with Waldi for refusing to go to Moyale or to Addis Ababa. Waldi had pleaded sickness in excuse, and Hapta Georgis had guessed that that was a mere blind. With characteristic obstinacy Waldi put off obeying this summons to the capital for nearly a year. *En passant*, there is no one more adept than an Abyssinian at evading an unpleasant interview. Owing to their habit of eating raw meat, all Abyssinians without exception suffer from tapeworm. From time to time, in order to get rid of the worms, they take a strong aperient medicine which incapacitates them for a day. Whenever they want to avoid an interview, they simply state that they have taken medicine, a euphemism which is practically equivalent to our own 'Not at home'.

My arrival now gave Waldi the opportunity to pose as an injured martyr, as he had not been consulted about my appointment. The more general reasons for his unfriendliness are easily explicable. I was the first European official to be sent to reside in Southern Abyssinia, and naturally the local chiefs, one and all, objected to having a white man about to watch all their activities and to report their misdeeds to the central government. Most of the Abyssinian officers were themselves implicated in the border incidents, and therefore resented my presence all the more strongly because it would curtail their freedom. Moreover, the idea was very prevalent that I had been sent to take over this part of the country on behalf of the British Government. Thus, when I considered all the circumstances, I could hardly feel surprised at Fitaurari Waldi's attitude.

His intention clearly was to make my stay as unpleasant as possible, so that I should not come back when once I had left the south. The anti-foreign, and especially anti-British feelings displayed by so many of the Abyssinians were the chief cause of all my later difficulties.

CHAPTER III

NEW FRIENDS—AND AN ENEMY

From Gardula to the frontier—Konso tribes—Boran province—Boran tribes—I meet Gerazmach Gashi—at Moyale—a brush with Kanyazmach Bokala—I stand a siege—I win the first round.

THE district south of Gardula, lying between the Gardula highlands and the highlands of Amaro, is inhabited by a tribe called Konso. Their country is extremely mountainous, but by making terraces after the fashion of Italian vineyards, the Konso are able to cultivate it intensively. Cotton and grain are produced in large quantities. The natives weave most of the cotton themselves and take the cloth to the markets at Mega, Gardula, and elsewhere. These people make very curious graves marked by groups of wooden images. In the middle of the grave is an image of the dead man and by his side is his wife, both shewn in the nude. Then, ranged on each side, are images of the different people and animals the man killed during his lifetime. An Abyssinian is always shewn riding a mule, and there are also distinctive postures or characteristics for the Boran and the natives of Sidamo. There are conventional signs for elephant, lion, giraffe, rhinoceros, so that a native can tell at a glance the bag of the dead man. Some of them must have been great warriors, as I have myself counted up to twenty images of people killed by the occupant of the grave.¹ The

¹ In a note upon the Konso graves, Mr. Henry Balfour, F.R.S., writes as follows: 'Certain parallelisms from other regions occur to one. One may, for instance, recall the description given by Aristotle



KONSO GRAVE.



VIEW NEAR GARDULA.

Konso are a brave and warlike race, and it is said they gave a great deal of trouble to the Abyssinians before they were finally conquered. Although they are only armed with spears, brigands give them a wide berth. On the only occasion on which they were attacked, the whole tribe was called together and the robbers were speared to a man.

The Konso district stretches as far south as the Sagan River. The country by this river is by far the most unhealthy part of Southern Abyssinia. It is infested with mosquitoes, and both men and animals find it dangerous. Human beings run a great risk of malaria, while mules and horses are stricken by a

of the Iberian practice of erecting around a warrior's grave obelisks to the number of the enemies slain by the deceased. It does not, however, appear that these obelisks were carved to represent human figures, but they served as a tally of the slain. In the Naga Hills a record of heads taken is sometimes added to the grave furniture of the dead warrior, in the form of carvings of heads indicating the number captured. To a head-hunting people, the head is the only part which is really significant, the whole body need not be indicated. The practice of placing figures of human form on or around the graves of important people is found in a somewhat different association in Japan. In former days it was the custom to kill a number of retainers and bury them with a deceased potentate in order to furnish the latter with a suitable retinue in the next world. At a later date a more humane variant of the rite was observed, and pottery images, *tsuchi-ningyo*, were substituted for the actual victims, and were erected on or around the burial mounds. These pottery figures of friends or retainers do not, of course, offer any very close parallel with the effigies of enemies among the Konso, except in so far as they symbolise a tally of victims who in former times would have been immolated. The old Japanese custom of sacrificing victims appears to have been introduced from China, and Tavernier describes how not only people of the court, but also the wives of a king, were buried alive with the dead chieftain. In those instances where the Konso graves have effigies both of the man and his wife, it would be of interest to ascertain whether the latter was usually compelled prematurely to rejoin her dead husband. Such a rite is widely spread and is associated with various culture-phases.'

I have since ascertained that it was not the Konso custom to bury the wife or wives alive when the husband died.

peculiar disease which almost always ends fatally. The Abyssinians say that the sickness is caused by a certain plant which grows on the banks of the Sagan, and in consequence, when crossing this district, they will always keep the bit in a mule's mouth (or in the case of a pack-mule tie up its mouth) so as to prevent the animal from grazing or picking at the grass as it goes along. In all probability, however, the infection is transmitted by flies or mosquitoes. The rubbing of the animals' coats with paraffin and the provision of mosquito nets for them have been suggested to prevent infection, but these expedients would be difficult to carry out in Abyssinia, and the only safe way is to avoid the low-lying regions where the mosquitoes abound. I am a firm believer in tying up the mules' mouths, as they do not then go poking about in the bushes and are therefore less likely to be bitten by mosquitoes. On my first visit to this part, I had particularly bad luck, for nearly all my animals eventually died of this disease.

The Abyssinians, like many other primitive people, are superstitious about illnesses. Nothing will shake their belief that the shadow cast by a certain large vulture, if it falls on a horse or mule, will cause its death from a form of paralysis.

The Boran state that there is a cure for horse and mule sickness, but I am very doubtful of its efficacy. It consists of a medicine made from the roots of two small flowering bushes. The medicine is administered three times daily, and simultaneously the animal's stomach and legs are swilled with cold water. The Boran have an implicit faith in the curative properties of this medicine, and they guard the secret of its manufacture jealously. A cure for this disease would be so invaluable that it might be advisable for extensive experiments to be tried under some competent veterinary expert.

South-east of the Sagan River lies the Boran country,

a wide, undulating plateau, enjoying a delightful climate by reason of its excellent rainfall. The wells, which sometimes go to a great depth, seem to have been made by a race endowed with considerable engineering skill. The former inhabitants who made these wells, instead of drawing the water up to the level of the ground, dug a path beginning at a distance of several hundred yards and gradually sloping down to the edge of the pit in which the water collects. The sides of the pit are roughly hewn out, so that the natives may sit on the protruding rocks and pass the water up from one to another.

The Boran people, who speak the Galla language, are to be found on both sides of the frontier between Abyssinia and Kenya Colony, but the Boran in British territory have a much harder struggle for existence than those in Abyssinia on account of the scarcity of water for their stock. The Boran are very quiet and inoffensive and never give any trouble. Consequently, both Europeans and Abyssinians generally despise them as cowards, but personally I consider this judgement most unfair. In the days of spears, the Boran were very warlike and more than held their own in battle with neighbouring tribes. Then the Abyssinians came armed with rifles and shot down the hapless Boran like rabbits. Being by nature a philosophical people, the Boran soon saw the uselessness of resisting the Abyssinian hordes. Nowadays a single Abyssinian can go to any big Boran village and get what he wants for the asking—not because the Boran are cowards, but simply because they lack the means of resistance. After many years of subjection, this passive rôle has become second nature to them. They certainly still fight courageously with the Sidamo natives on their northern border who are armed in a similar manner to themselves. It is difficult, however, to like or respect tribes who allow themselves to be terrorised by a few bandits, when

united action, like that taken by the Konso, would rid them of these pests.

The Boran are pagans, but have a distinct religion, connected with snake-worship. Their tribal organisation is extremely complex.¹ Here are two Boran customs which I came upon by accident. I once passed a place on the road covered with tufts of grass. I asked what this meant and was told that a Boran had once died there, and the people who passed threw a tuft of grass on the spot to bring them luck. On another occasion I passed a tree from which hung a bunch of dried-up tails of elephant, giraffe, and rhinoceros. When a Boran dies who has killed any of these animals, his relatives tie up the tails of his trophies in a tree close to a public road to shew passers-by what a great hunter he used to be.

The Boran are divided into two main sections, Sabu and Gona, at this time under Fitaurari Gadu and Fitaurari Goyu respectively. The two sections, owing to intermarriage, are now less separate than they used to be, and in most villages they are both represented. It may be said that the Sabu live in Dirri (i.e., north of the Daua River), but this is a very rough distinction. Shortly after crossing the Sagan River, I passed Fitaurari Gadu. This chief was a very friendly old man, who had received his Abyssinian rank from the Emperor Menelik. With all his politeness, he gave me the impression that he was dying to tell me something but was afraid to do so. After giving my men a bullock and some sheep, he said to me more than once: 'This is my private gift. It has nothing to do with the Government.' Eventually, I came to the conclusion that he had received more or less definite orders to give me nothing, and had adopted the ingenious subterfuge of a 'private gift' in order, at

¹ Mr. Clifford H. F. Plowman gives a detailed account of the Gedamoch ceremonies among the Boran, in the *Journal of the African Society* (London, January, 1919, Vol. XVIII, pp. 114-21).

one and the same time, to fulfil the canons of hospitality, to stand well with me, and to avoid the wrath of Fitaurari Waldi. He tried to borrow my elephant rifle, offering in return to share the ivory with me. This ingenuous request amused me, for the old man could not conceive that I should have any scruples in breaking the Abyssinian Government's restrictions upon elephant shooting.

All along the road, the Boran were kind and helpful, but they detest the Abyssinians and I had to be most careful in what I said. One group came to me with a tale about a lot of Abyssinian soldiers, who, they said, had been sent down to Moyale. 'They have destroyed houses in your country and want to get chief Dido Doyo from you. You have a lot of soldiers on your side. If you are going to fight, we want to help you; but give us rifles, as we have only spears.' This was a pretty proposal to put before a man whose business it was to try to keep the border quiet. Naturally, I had to explain that I had been sent down by the British authorities to make a great friendship with the Abyssinians in order to prevent such a situation as they suggested from arising. It was all the more necessary to reply in that way in case the Boran were simply acting as spies for the Abyssinians. Time after time I had to listen to Boran stories of the disgraceful way in which the Abyssinians oppressed them. If I had agreed with their accounts, off the Boran would have run to the nearest Abyssinian chief to report what I had said. In the circumstances, the only thing for me to do was to tell them that I thought the country was, on the whole, well governed and I could not understand their grievances. Doubtless this reached the ears of the Abyssinians and helped to smooth my path with them.

I was still many miles from the frontier when a messenger bearing a letter from Moyale met my caravan, and I learnt that some new trouble had

occurred. Some time previously, Dickinson, the officer commanding the Moyale garrison, and Glenday, the District Commissioner, after discussing the matter amicably with one of Fitaurari Waldi's subordinates, Gerazmach Gashi by name, built three small grass huts on a hill which was unquestionably within British territory. Early in July, a certain Kanyazmach Bokala, son of Fitaurari Waldi, appeared at Moyale and insolently told the British official in charge to pull the huts down. After a long and heated argument, Bokala agreed to be satisfied if he could put up three similar huts opposite the others but on the Abyssinian side of the frontier. Two days later, however, he changed his mind, came across the line, and deliberately pulled down the British huts.

Upon receiving this news, I gave up my projected visit to Mega Mountain and made straight for Moyale. Passing through Deka Roba, I called upon Gerazmach Gashi, who afterwards became one of my greatest friends. He was ill in bed, but having been warned of my arrival he ordered a magnificent escort in my honour. He gave me no food, telling me that he was a chief under another's orders but that he was sending me one of his own bullocks. He impressed upon me that his gift was not a Government bullock. Our conversation went very well. Gashi told me how much he liked the British officials at Moyale, and how easy it was to work with them. He said that they were always courteous and kind, and only recently had sent him a couple of bottles of whisky. He called for one of these and proceeded to drink, without turning a hair, nips which I am sure would soon have killed an ordinary person. It is no exaggeration to say he would fill half a tumbler with whisky and drink it neat, and go on repeating the performance while the bottle remained. During all the years I have known Gashi, I have never seen him give in to a bottle of whisky. There is only one other

chief I have met who could hold a candle to him. I used to supply this man with whisky in a port glass. He had a trick which fascinated me of taking the whole glassful at one gulp, accompanied by a noise like the drawing of a cork. It was as instantaneous as the flick of a lizard's tongue to seize a fly.

We discussed the recent incident at Moyale, and Gashi admitted that there was no excuse for Bokala's outrageous conduct. He proceeded to tell me confidentially that there was very strong opposition to my appointment in the south; it would be more than his position was worth to shew me any open friendship, but he would do anything in his power to help me *sub rosa*. The poor man seemed thoroughly frightened—presumably of Fitaurari Waldi. Nevertheless, I formed a very favourable impression of him, which I have never had occasion to revise. Gashi is a loyal and patriotic Abyssinian, but he has the foresight to see that the British officials on the border really wish to live in peace and friendship with his countrymen.

Hurrying on from Deka Roba, I arrived at Moyale on 25th July, 1915, having travelled about 230 miles since leaving Gardula. After pitching my camp, I went over to the British side and saw Glenday, who was the District Commissioner at Moyale at this time. Glenday had had a very trying time with Bokala, and it was only through his tact that the incident had not become really serious. On my return, Kanyazmach Bokala received me politely—indeed too politely for my liking—, visited my camp, and gave me a bullock. He informed my interpreter that he badly wanted a rifle. I shewed him a letter from his father, Waldi, stating that I was coming to Moyale and was going to make my camp close to his house, and that no one was to hinder me. Bokala and I discussed very amicably a site for my camp, and at last he chose a place on a deserted ridge about five or ten minutes' walk from

Waldi's house. It was agreed that I should put up my tents there but should build nothing. During the next few days I had several interviews with Bokala, and sounded him discreetly upon the question of the huts which he had destroyed. It was very soon obvious that no satisfaction was to be obtained from him. When I hinted that he and his father might be relieved of their posts, he was quite unconcerned, remarking that they could go and live on their own property near Gardula. A second time he mentioned to my interpreter that he wanted a rifle. The next time we met he asked me point-blank for a rifle, and I told him that we would see what the future brought forth.

A day or two later, on 30th July, I asked Bokala to lunch and he agreed to come at noon, mentioning to my man that he did not eat meat killed by a Muhammedan. Accordingly, I arranged to give him tinned meats, and went to the trouble of turning out my glass and providing sweets and wine. On the morning of the lunch, one of Bokala's men came with a curt oral message that his master could not come before two o'clock. I ignored the slight and waited till long after two. As he still did not turn up and I had an appointment with Glenday at half past three, I had lunch alone. I then left to go over to the British side, but seeing Bokala coming over the rise I returned to my tent to receive him. I turned out my men in his honour and welcomed him politely, explaining that owing to my appointment I could only spare him a few minutes, but we could meet again later on. Instead of apologising for coming so late, he said that Glenday could wait. I replied that it was not our custom to break appointments and that I certainly would not put Glenday off. I offered him whisky, which he refused. He then put his *shamma* (a kind of toga worn by the Abyssinians) over his mouth—a customary gesture of self-im-

portance—, and began to threaten me in the Amharic equivalent of Billingsgate. I gathered that he would not allow me to keep my appointment, and that he would stop me from travelling at all in the future. His outburst took me completely by surprise, as we had not mentioned official matters and I had been perfectly courteous to him. I told him that my orders came to me through higher officials than himself, and I was not prepared to discuss my freedom of movement with him. His passion soon spent itself, and on parting he asked me not to be angry with him. I replied of course that I was not angry, and after shaking hands he departed on quite good terms with me.

A few minutes later, I left my camp in company with two of my men to go over to the British side. In front of Bokala's house we found him posted with a big escort of soldiers. As we passed, he stopped us and shouted out to everybody that he was going to send his soldiers to pull up my tents next morning, unless I moved my camp to another place by his house. The place he suggested was a filthy spot, already cumbered with soldiers' tents and various kinds of rubbish. Since Bokala himself had chosen my present camping-ground, I declined to move, and added that he would be answerable for any action he took. I then went on to my appointment with Glenday.

Upon returning later in the afternoon, I was met by Bokala with a retinue of soldiers. In dictatorial tones he ordered my interpreter up to him and said : 'Tell your master that if he does not move his camp I will stop him and his men and his animals from going anywhere, and I will put soldiers to see that no one leaves his camp. Tell your master to reply to this message to-morrow morning.' I went on to my tents, and was relieved to find that nothing had been tampered with in my absence.

My position was certainly unpleasant. Bokala

had a large number of soldiers on the spot and seemed capable of any idiocy. In Abyssinia, at that time, anyone who behaved badly to a European was a hero in the eyes of the people, and would probably be secretly rewarded for his misdeeds. Thus, I argued on general grounds that Bokala had plenty of incentive to persist in his outrageous conduct. I could only play a waiting game, doing my best to hang on where I was until Bokala's superiors could be informed of his behaviour. Accordingly I drafted the following reply to Bokala's message :

‘ From the English Government Consul, Mr. Hodson :
To the Honourable Kanyazmach Bokala.

How have you passed the day ? Thank God I am well. I heard your threats in my tent this afternoon : first, that you would stop me from travelling anywhere ; secondly, that you would hinder me from going to the British camp. Also, on leaving my camp and passing your house this afternoon, I heard your threat, issued in the presence of the public, that you were going to send the soldiers to-morrow to pull down my tents. I have never yet received such an insult in Abyssinia, nor is it usual, I believe, for one chief to address another chief in such a manner in public.

On my return this evening you called my interpreter away from me, and sent me a message. I have received it. You now say that unless I move my camp you will stop me and my men from going over the border, and that you will not allow them to go anywhere.

I must point out to you that I have been appointed a Consul in your country, and that gives me the right to travel anywhere. This has been done by the great Ministers in Addis Ababa and your master Fitaurari Hapta Georgis, the Minister for War. In addition to this, I have the necessary passports to return to

Addis Ababa. So your opposition is not a good thing.

Now, with regard to my camp, it is close to your house, and was chosen only after consultation with you and with your permission. In fact, you even sent men to help to clear this place for me, and said to me yourself that this camp was suitable in every respect. I have now unpacked my things and cannot move, and if you send soldiers to tear down my tents, you do so at your peril.

I shall be glad to have it in writing that you refuse to let me travel, and that you refuse to let me send my animals out to graze, and that you will not give me permission to cross the border to visit the officer on the other side.

Your father, the Governor of this country, said in his letter to you that you were not to hinder me. You are now doing so. Also, the Ministers in Addis Ababa will not be pleased when they hear how you have threatened a stranger and a guest in your country. Since I have been here, out of courtesy I have done nothing without first asking your permission, which makes your conduct inexplicable to me.'

On 1st August I received a letter from Bokala reiterating his demands and making the absurd suggestion that I had been sent down to take the Boran country away from them. My milk supply was stopped that morning, and all day my camp was watched by soldiers. I then wrote to Bokala for permission to send letters to Gardula and Addis Ababa. He refused, and told my headman that he had sent soldiers to all the neighbouring wells with orders to seize any of my men who passed, whether bearing letters or not. In other words, I could only communicate with anyone at the risk of a fracas with the Abyssinian soldiers, a risk which was to be avoided at all costs on account of the grave consequences

that might arise. At the same time, it was out of the question for me to obey his orders to move my camp. Had I done so, I might as well never have set foot in the country as a Consul for all the influence and respect I should be able to command. It would have been all that Bokala wanted if he were able to boast of the way in which he ordered the British Consul about. He had recently come from Addis Ababa, and pretended to have the authority of Lij Yasu and Fitaurari Hapta Georgis for his behaviour. As I was virtually a prisoner, I could not call his bluff. My temper was getting frayed, but I simply had to make up my mind that my patience should outlast his.

The deadlock thus continued. My own men provided the next incident to add to the excitement—or to relieve the monotony—of my siege. With the exception of about a dozen, they all went on strike one morning. I asked each man individually whether he would do his work, and after warning them that refusal would entail instant dismissal I gave them time to consider the matter. Most of the strikers elected to go—which relieved me of all responsibility for them and saved the Government several hundred dollars, for it had been my intention to send them back to the capital at the British Government's expense. This last fact I then made known, so that Bokala should not think I was in difficulties, and the men who had decided to leave me looked—and felt—foolish.

I continued to sit tight in my camp, so avoiding any pretext for the use of violence by Bokala. This was not what the man expected. Probably he anticipated that I would capitulate within a couple of days. At any rate he was nonplussed by my attitude of dignified silence, and I learnt three or four days later that he was excusing his conduct on the ground that I was beginning to put up buildings where I was

encamped. When I arrived, I told Bokala that I would put up no buildings without Waldi's permission, and I had not even erected a shed for my ponies or a shelter for my kitchen. Meanwhile, my animals, deprived of exercise and good grazing, were suffering horribly from the ticks in my camp quarters, and on 12th August all the ponies died. The ticks were a veritable plague. Neither before nor since have I seen them so bad anywhere. Even top-boots were no protection, as they used to climb up in lines. In the end I had to carry a clothes-brush about with me to brush them off. I notified Bokala immediately that the responsibility for the loss of my animals was his and that compensation would be required from him. In reply he told my messenger that I was not a prisoner; but when, next morning, I sent down several of my men to have this confirmed, he again contradicted himself and said that I should remain a prisoner until I complied with his original demands.

On 14th August, I delivered an ultimatum, recapitulating to Bokala his absurdities, inconsistencies, and contradictions, and pointing out that he had killed all my ponies and that I and my men were beginning to suffer in health owing to the confinement. I demanded to know once and for all whether we were to continue to be imprisoned in the camp, and warned him that I should not have any further discussion with him. Bokala received my deputation with a wearisome tirade, compact of the childish nonsense which was characteristic of the man. In the end, however, he said that I could leave the camp. The man had the audacity to add to his letter announcing this decision a request for the loan of a shot-gun. I replied that I was pleased to have permission to go, and that I had no shot-gun to lend him. He then wished to say good-bye to me, but I declined to receive him, telling him frankly that, after

his extraordinary behaviour, I wished to have nothing more to do with him.

Passive resistance had won the day for me—but at a cost. For thirteen days I had not been fifty yards from my tents, and, besides my three ponies, five mules and two donkeys had died. Once the unpleasant affair was finished and my mind was at ease, I realised that some such trouble was bound to arise sooner or later, and that on the whole it was an advantage to get it over quickly. My victory certainly cleared the air. Bokala's discomfiture shewed all the local people that, however much they objected to my appointment, they could not terrorise me. So far good, but at the same time my success tended to confirm their worst fears about my coming, namely, that in some way or another I was bent on dispossessing them of the Boran country, which, needless to say, was without the slightest foundation.

To finish the story of my first brush with Kanyazmach Bokala, I reported the whole affair to Captain the Hon. W. G. Thesiger, who was then the British Minister at Addis Ababa. He took up the question at once with Fitaurari Hapta Georgis, who expressed surprise that a mere boy like Bokala should hold any official position, and promised to despatch orders to Waldi for the recall of Bokala to Addis Ababa. But that was not the last that I heard of Bokala.

CHAPTER IV

FROM MOYALE TO LAKE STEFANIE

Journey along the border towards Lake Stefanie—the deceit of guides—we discover water—grim relics of a border raid—domestic drama at Moyale—fireworks.

THE boundary between Abyssinia and Kenya Colony stretches from Lake Rudolf on the west to the junction of the Daua and Juba rivers on the east, a distance of more than 450 miles. Moyale is very nearly midway along the frontier. My first duty was to obtain a first-hand knowledge of the country on both sides of this frontier, and my original plan had been to begin by travelling west from Moyale on the Abyssinian side towards Lakes Stefanie and Rudolf. Owing to Bokala's hostility, this was out of the question for the moment. I decided, therefore, to modify my plan to the extent of going on the British instead of the Abyssinian side of the frontier.

I left Moyale on 23rd August, 1915, with a caravan of camels, which are the only transport animals suitable for travelling on the border owing to the scarcity of water. At Burroli, where I was to branch off the Marsabit road, I took the opportunity of climbing the escarpment at this point, and found it a bigger expedition than I had bargained for. The higher I climbed, the denser became the bush, and when at last I reached the top my clothes bore traces of the effort. But the view of the arid waste over which I had travelled and had still to travel seemed to me an adequate reward. It is difficult to explain

why a desert covered with stones and boulders should attract, but it does attract me. Perhaps in some past age some of us were lizards and lived in stony wastes, and all our prehistoric instincts have not been evolved from us.

Leaving Burroli on 30th August, I went on to Yasheri, where lived Galla Rassa, chief of the Gabbra residing in British territory. This man had been instructed to give me guides, and was profuse in his protestations of friendship. From the beginning, the two men he provided for me assured me that I could not go where I wanted because it would be impossible to get enough water. At Banali, some fifteen miles farther on, as I found a considerable amount of rain-water collected in a deep cave on the side of the hill, I began to have doubts of their good faith. However, I continued my journey along the foot of the escarpment to Gara Dimtu. My further progress depended entirely upon my getting water of some sort. On arrival the only supply to be found was a few bucketfuls of filthy and stinking rain-water in caves at the side of the rock, in one of which were the remains of a leopard. The wretched beast had evidently fallen in and been unable to get out. My men and I hunted around, and eventually, at the top of a gully, we found a depression containing perhaps a couple of handfuls of water. We at once began to dig a well here, and after some hard work obtained a sufficient supply of water for ourselves and our camels. The guides were visibly annoyed when we set about digging. Their idea, of course, was that if we failed to find water, we should be compelled to turn back, and upon being cross-questioned, they confessed that such were the actual instructions they had received from Galla Rassa.

The country between Moyale and Gara Dimtu is mainly of black soil covered by thorn bush. After heavy rain it must be practically impassable. Since

leaving Yasheri I had come across numerous elephant tracks, but had not the good fortune to run up against any of the elephants themselves. The great brutes have an extraordinary capacity for hiding themselves away, and seem harder to find than a hare. I had also discovered fairly recent traces of Abyssinian poachers' encampments. Shortage of water now prevented me from continuing my journey with the entire party. I therefore decided to cut down kit to the minimum, and to leave everything that could be dispensed with at Gara Dimtu close to the well we had dug. Five of my men remained behind with instructions to guard the water at all costs. The camels however went on with me, an arrangement which enabled me to divide the animals into two sections, loading one half for one trek and the other half for the next. I have always found this an excellent plan when there is likely to be hard trekking.

The depleted caravan left Gara Dimtu on 4th September and reached Huri next day. Huri is not a village, nor even a well, but simply a district of numerous conical hills, covered with huge boulders of volcanic origin. There was of course no track at all, and the camels had to make their own way over the heaped masses of lava—a labour which taxed them to the utmost. We wasted much precious time during the next two days hunting without success for water. I myself climbed one of the highest points to take observations, and one of the Gabbra who accompanied me appeared to know the names of the surrounding hills. The average elevation of the Huri hills is about 5,000 feet, and the climate is dry and bracing, but there is no shade, and night and day a wind blows steadily which makes the pitching of a tent a difficult matter. As the two guides were utterly useless and pretended to know nothing, I sent them back to Galla Rassa, and then set out on the afternoon of 7th September to try to find El Adi. If we succeeded

there would be a chance of getting water by digging, and in the worst event, as we had still several tanks of water in reserve, I hoped that we should be able to get back to our base at Gara Dimtu.

After going a short distance I made the Gabbra who had seemed to know the country act as guide. He plucked a handful of grass and threw it into the air—a gesture equivalent, I suppose, to our kissing the Bible—and swore by all his gods that he did not know the way. I guessed that he was lying, and let him know it. It soon turned out that the man was thoroughly familiar with the district. The going now became worse and worse. Every inch of the ground was strewn with sharp stones and boulders; it was marvellous how the camels got through at all. Our progress was painful and slow, and I saw that, unless we got water at El Adi, we should be in difficulties on the return journey. Owing to the nature of the country, trekking by night was out of the question, and by day we had never a vestige of shade for man or beast—conditions which are apt to knock up the strongest. I had to cut down the water rations to a minimum; but in spite of this and many other discomforts, my Abyssinians behaved splendidly. We reached El Adi after nightfall on 8th September, and much to my satisfaction found a plentiful supply of water in a well. This water had been fouled by game, but was drinkable though unpleasant. The next day, we discovered another well, close by the first. It was covered with a layer of earth, then of branches, and then of logs. Upon removing these, we found a copious supply of excellent water. The importance of this well cannot be over-estimated; it is the key to the border between Moyale and Stefanie. Its existence simplifies the problem of watching the frontier, for men can be stationed there or patrols sent there at any time with the certainty of finding plenty of water.

After leaving El Adi, we went on a short distance to Gara Sura, a hill which looks like an exaggerated rifle butt. Here was a village which had been inhabited by Gabbra and had been raided in the previous May by a band of Abyssinians and Gallāba about fifty strong from the country lying between Lakes Stefanie and Rudolf. The village, which was situated to the south of the hill and well inside British territory, presented a scene of wild confusion. Bowls, sticks, chairs, mats, wooden spoons, and all kinds of household utensils were lying about everywhere. The huts had been ransacked and everything of value removed, but the raiders had not troubled to set fire to the place. It was now deserted, but among the debris we discovered seven complete skulls, besides many broken pieces of the skulls of women and children. Altogether, I collected the remains of at least ten persons who had lost their lives. How many other victims there were of whom all trace had been removed by the depredations of hyenas and vultures, it was impossible to estimate. The survivors who escaped to Marsabit reported fourteen casualties in their village. The raiders got away with seven kraals of cattle and eight of sheep and goats from Sura, while they looted eight more kraals of sheep and goats from Galan close by.

Near El Adi there was a village of British Gabbra, who, when they heard of this raid, started to flee to Yasheri, Galla Rassa's village, driving their stock with them. Having cattle and calves, they went round to the north of Huri in order to avoid the difficult country, but were caught by the raiders just on the Abyssinian side of the frontier. It appeared that twenty-four of them were murdered and three kraals of cattle and eight of sheep and goats taken. I heard later that on their return journey the raiders were overtaken by two of Fitaurari Waldi's soldiers and two Boran, who however did not dare to interfere with so strong a party.

The most incredible feature of the whole affair was that it had never been reported, although obviously Galla Rassa and other Gabbra headmen knew all about it. There were only two possible explanations: either Galla Rassa was in some way connected with the raiders, or else he had been warned by the Abyssinians to keep his mouth shut lest a worse fate befall him. The first was rather far-fetched even for Abyssinia, where it is the unexpected that happens; but it could not be entirely dismissed, for many years earlier both Galla Rassa and his son had been imprisoned for being mixed up with poachers and other disreputable people. All things considered, the second explanation seemed the more probable one. At any rate, it was now pretty clear that the old rascal had tried to obstruct my journey because he knew well enough that I should discover things about the raid which would not enhance his reputation with the authorities.

Then there was Fitaaurari Waldi's position in the affair to be considered. The raiders certainly came across from Abyssinia, and it was Waldi's business to stop that kind of thing. Had he failed for lack of power or lack of will—because he had not the force to deal with so large a party, or because he secretly approved of such exploits? The most suspicious thing about it was that the raiders only attacked the natives living in British territory, and never touched the fat Gabbra villages on the Abyssinian side. Moreover, Waldi had not breathed a word about the affair to me when I saw him nor sent up any report to Addis Ababa, although most of the details could not have failed to reach him by that time.

From Sura we went to El Dukana, where, on the west bank of the dry river Wata, are splendid stone wells, giving an unlimited supply of water. The next stage of the journey brought us to El Saru, called Sardu by the Gabbra, which lies to the west of the

Bullul River, a few miles from the mountains Jibbissa and Burrchuma. Here again there are stone wells and plenty of water. We also discovered unmistakable traces of the raiders, including the kraals in which they had kept the stock at night and an Abyssinian type of house, consisting of two compartments with a room for making beer and a stall for a mule, which seemed to have been used by the leader of the band as his headquarters. The river Bullul, when in flood, brings down a large volume of water. According to information supplied by the natives, the Wata joins the Bullul, which flows into a pan called Hor, as does the Rerribba, the river bed upon which El Adi is situated. 'Flow' is perhaps misleading, for these 'rivers' are all dry except in the rains. During the greater part of this trip, by the time we reached camp we were all too tired to do much shooting, but in the neighbourhood of El Saru we found gazelle, and so managed to get plenty of fresh meat. West of Gara Dimtu we saw no elephant spoor, the country being generally much too open in character for these animals. From this fact it was to be inferred that the uninvited guests from the other side of the frontier came, not to poach ivory, but simply to loot the stock belonging to the natives within British territory. The luckless Gabbra were constantly suffering in this way but they never attempted to put up any resistance, preferring to take to their heels at the first news of danger. At the time of this journey, owing to the raid which I have described, there was not a living soul nor a single head of stock between Gara Dimtu and Lake Stefanie. It was better so, for if the natives had returned they would only have served as a bait to the raiders and become an easy prey. If conditions in Abyssinia should ever necessitate it, the patrolling of the frontier between Moyale and Lake Stefanie will be an easy matter now that supplies of water are assured at Gara Dimtu, El Adi, El Dukana, and El Saru.

On the return journey from El Saru we avoided the worst country about Huri, taking a shorter and much easier route to the north, and arrived back at Moyale at the end of September. One item of the local gossip that awaited us there interested me particularly. Kanyazmach Bokala of evil memory had been up to mischief again, and by illegally seizing their cattle and similar depredations had incensed the Boran to the extent of driving them to send an influential deputation to Addis Ababa to report his misdeeds to Fitaurari Hapta Georgis. A case of wife-stealing had created a local sensation. A Boran of the Hawatu section, Alio Gombo by name, was married to the daughter of Dido Doyo, one of the Boran chiefs living in British territory. Just after I had left Moyale, the woman was abducted by—or eloped with—a Somali called Mahmud Ismail. The guilty pair fled across the frontier, and Mahmud is said to have bribed Bokala to protect them. At any rate Bokala refused to surrender either of them, whereupon the irate husband went back to his people in Dirri and stirred them up to make things unpleasant for Bokala—which they appeared to have done pretty effectively. Another complication in this little domestic drama now came to light. For some time past Mahmud Ismail had been giving substantial presents to Dido Doyo—presumably to avoid incurring the wrath of the father as well as the husband. The plan worked well, for Dido Doyo declined to be put out by the elopement, thereby incurring the displeasure of his tribesmen. Unfortunately, I had to leave Moyale again before the scandal developed any further, and never heard what the dénouement was.

Once when I was staying at Moyale—whether it was on this occasion or later I really forget and anyhow the point does not matter—the officers of the station decided to give a display of fireworks in honour of somebody or something. There were some ship's

rockets in the store which they proposed to let off. I asked whether anyone present knew how to handle rockets, but was politely squashed for my pains. My question had been put in all seriousness, for I looked upon rockets with suspicion—and not without reason.

Some years ago, more than I care to look back upon, I was on a shooting trip with my chief in a wild and unknown tract of country south of the Zambesi. The trekking had been difficult and bad, water was scarce, and none of us, therefore, was in the best of tempers. One afternoon, my chief, who was a great sportsman, went on ahead with one of my bushmen. Before they started, the place where we were going to camp that night was carefully explained to the bushman. The rest of the party duly trekked on, and a little before sunset outspanned for the night. Food was cooked and the camp prepared. The sun went down, and, as happens in the tropics, night fell almost at once. The chief, however, had not yet joined us, and we began to feel a little anxious, but not unduly so, as we thought he had probably shot some animal and been delayed in skinning it. To be on the safe side, we fired off a few rifle shots, but there was no response. An hour passed, and still the chief did not turn up.

We were now seriously alarmed. The chief had with him only one bushman, who was little more than a boy, and, moreover, could speak no known language. Anything might have happened, and we were utterly helpless till daylight broke—by which time our help might come too late. It then occurred to us that we had some rockets in the wagons for use in an emergency of this sort. These were produced. They were of the variety, I believe, called ship's rockets—nasty, ugly things with blunt noses and fat bodies. The next question was whether anyone knew how to set them off. I suggested that they had to have tails, but someone overruled me with the

sapient remark that tails were only required for small fireworks. Another, wiser still, said it was only necessary to stand them on the ground, when they would go straight up beautifully. He retired in disorder, however, when I asked how they could be lit if they sat on the ground, and added that I thought everybody at least knew that a rocket was lit by putting a glowing stick or light to its base. In the end, we reached a characteristically British compromise, and agreed to hang one of the beasts on the branch of a neighbouring bush and see what happened.

One important question, however, had to be decided first: who was to set it off? The senior member of the party was excused on the ground of marriage, and he beat a dignified strategic retreat to a coign of vantage behind the wagons. There were two of us left, and the lot fell upon me. All this time the camp was in perfect peace. The bullocks, tied to the trek chains, lay contentedly chewing the cud, the natives were squatting round their fires having their evening meal, and at the end of the camp was a big fire which we had made to attract the wanderers.

We now prepared a long stick, and when its end was red hot, it was handed to me. Thus equipped, I approached the tree where the rocket was dangling from a branch. For a long time, try as I would, I could not get the firebrand in, but at last I succeeded. With a shrill hiss, the beastly thing, instead of going up into the air as it was meant to do, turned a complete somersault, fell on the ground, and rushed hither and thither, like one possessed, vomiting fire and smoke. The oxen panicked and bolted, twisting the wagons round and knocking everything over in their terror. The poor bushmen were as frightened as the bullocks. Pandemonium reigned till, with a final hiss and spurt, the rocket expired.

Then we set to work to repair the damage, collect the bullocks, and make the camp ship-shape again.

Still the chief did not appear, so we decided we must fire off another rocket. This time I insisted upon a tail. Accordingly we made a tail and clamped it firmly on to the rocket. The tail was then put into a bottle, and the bottle was buried up to its neck in the ground. The device succeeded, and the rocket behaved as a self-respecting rocket should and soared up into the air in the best style. We were just congratulating ourselves on our skill, when the little bushman whom I had sent with my chief stalked into the camp like a ghost. He had in his hand a cleft stick, and in the cleft was a note. My worst fears were now confirmed ; some serious accident must have befallen my chief which prevented him from coming to the camp himself. Trembling with anxiety, I opened and read the note. It was short and to the point. It read 'Where are the wagons ?' with his initials below. I was now, if anything, still more frightened. I asked the bushman where the great chief was. We all stood aghast when he pointed to a tree only a few hundreds yards away, and said 'He has been there since sundown by that tree, and has been watching the devils [rockets]'.

I guessed what had happened. There had been a misunderstanding about the camping ground, and the chief thought I had changed it without letting him know—a very serious offence in such country. We now had to settle which of us was to go forward to interview him. Because he was married (what a lot married men have to be thankful for !), the senior member was again excused, and I and the third man strode forth into the darkness to meet our fate. In a few minutes we caught sight of the chief, standing by the tree before a very small fire with his arms folded and in his eye an ominous look that did not presage peace. We took our wiggings, and as a punishment were ordered to inspan and bring on the camp. On the morrow my chief forgave me ; he was the

kindest and most considerate of men, whom we all loved and for whom we would have done anything.

Now, if the officers at Moyale had allowed me to tell them of my experience with rockets, they might have profited by it, but I never had a chance. After dining well, we all went outside to one of the trenches, where the pyrotechnic display was to take place. Dickinson, the senior military officer present and therefore presumably the best authority on explosives, began laying rockets in a row on the sloping sand. *The rockets had no tails.* Again I lifted up my voice in protest, but without avail. I could do no more, and discreetly took cover behind a neighbouring building. Dickinson then got into the trench and lit the rockets, or rather one of them. With a shriek and a splutter, it turned its somersault, as I knew it would, rushed along the ground scattering people right and left, went up into the air a little, luckily missing the thatched roofs, and so came to its appointed end. My vindication was complete, and it was many months before my friends at Moyale were able to make the score all square between us.

CHAPTER V

ANOTHER JOURNEY AND AN ELEPHANT HUNT

Journey to the Daua River—a cure for dysentery—the situation on the border—shooting lions—visit of Fitaaurari Ashanafi—learning the language—big-game shooting on Marsabit Mountain—chased by elephants—I return to Addis Ababa.

AFTER a few days' rest, I set out again from Moyale with a caravan of camels to travel along the border as far as the Daua River. Some forty miles from Moyale, we came upon the remains of two freshly killed elephants. Natives who were still cutting up the meat told us that the animals had been shot on the previous day by Abyssinians from Gaddaduma, an Abyssinian frontier post about a dozen miles away. The frontier line in many places is vague, and it was difficult to say in whose territory these elephants were. However, I had to visit the official in charge at Gaddaduma in order to discuss other matters, and I determined incidentally to see what he would say about the elephants. The man in question, one Gerazmach Gabra Taklei, was a genial fellow, far more sensible than the generality of his countrymen. He openly told me that he had not the slightest idea where exactly the boundary line ran—which was a big confession, for the Abyssinians mostly pretend to be quite sure about it. After discussing outstanding complaints at great length and with a certain measure of success, I asked him who killed the two elephants that I had seen. He looked guilty, but lied cheerfully, saying that he knew nothing about them and

the Tigre (robbers) must have killed them. 'But you are here at Gaddaduma, and your people have another post at Godoma. It does not shew much care on your part if Tigre can come between these places and shoot elephants without your knowing it.' He countered this by mentioning that he had recently had several severe engagements with Tigre and had fired off a lot of ammunition. 'How many casualties were there?' I inquired. 'None', said he. 'Well, you must all be very bad shots', I remarked. During our long conversation, Gabra Taklei and I struck up quite a friendship. He, like other Abyssinian chiefs, never hesitated to turn round and suddenly start talking to somebody else, or to yawn capaciously without any attempt at concealment or apology. I was only beginning to learn that behaviour of this kind is not considered rude in Abyssinian society.

I left one of my men, who was seriously ill with fever, at Gaddaduma in the care of the Abyssinians, and pushed on to Derkali over flat country covered with thick bush and apparently devoid of any permanent water. We found a little water at a place called Dandu, but that dries up and can never be relied upon. Even at Derkali the supply is insufficient to meet the demands made upon it, and, though our party was small, it was only possible to water the animals on alternate days. In this neighbourhood we passed some Gurre villages where the inhabitants—human and animal—were living entirely on roots in place of water. One kind was given to the animals, and a different kind was used by the human beings, who also, of course, drank the milk from the goats. The goats and sheep, as well as the natives we saw, appeared to fare quite well on this diet. These people, the Gurre, who are the chief occupants of the country between Gaddaduma and the Daua River, are similar to the Somalis in appearance, and speak both Galla and Somali.

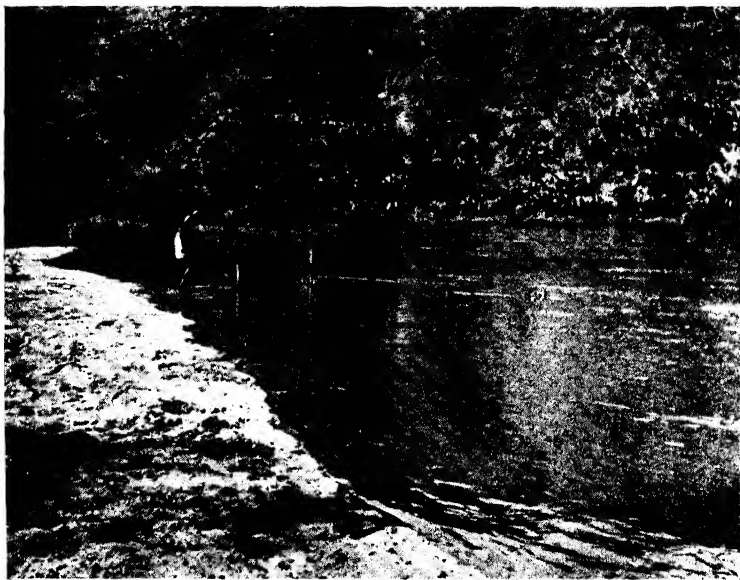
Parting from Deck and Glenday at Derkali, I passed through El Bode and El Mole, and reached the Daa at Malka Murri. The plain is here about 3,200 feet above sea-level, but the Daa valley is some 2,000 feet lower. The river was in flood when I reached it, and must have measured quite eighty yards from bank to bank. The abundance of tropical vegetation along the stream, with conspicuous clumps of palm trees, produced a very picturesque effect. More interesting to us, however, was what the river contained in the way of fish, for we were all anxious to have a change of diet. Game of all kinds was plentiful. Giraffe especially were numerous and wonderfully tame; there were lions and elephants in fair numbers, and I saw oryx and lesser kudu in addition.

Coming back from the Daa River to Moyale, I had one of my men very ill with dysentery. Unfortunately, my stock of medicine was low, and I had run out of chlorodyne entirely. I therefore sent on an urgent letter to Moyale, asking that a supply should be sent back to me as soon as possible. Between Gaddaduma and Moyale we met the mail runners going out towards the Daa. I asked them whether they had any medicines, and they said they had a bottle, which they gave to me. The bottle was unlabelled, but I had no doubt that it was intended for me, because it was the easiest matter for the label to get knocked off *en route*. I cheered the sick man up, telling him that we should soon put him right now, and gave him a strong dose from the bottle. I continued this treatment till we reached Moyale. The patient said the medicine burnt but made him feel better. On arrival at Moyale, I thanked the medical officer for sending me out the chlorodyne so expeditiously. Looking surprised and puzzled, he said that he had not sent any because they were out of it themselves. 'But' said I, 'I found the bottle

in the mail, and I have been giving it to my man ever since.' 'Good heavens!' he replied. 'That was not chlorodyne, but iodine for the post at Derkali. It's a lucky thing you have not killed the man.' We did not persist in the experiment, but gave the man a few hypodermic injections of emetine, after which he soon recovered.

Dysentery is very prevalent in Abyssinia. I have found that the best cure is a good dose of castor oil to which has been added a few drops of chlorodyne (not iodine!), followed by a teaspoonful of Epsom salts every hour for a day or even two days. This is generally sufficient, but if it fails an hypodermic injection of emetine has to be given morning and evening for six days, unless the disease is got under sooner.

From the information which I gathered on this trip, it seemed that the principal source of trouble on the border was the presence of Abyssinian soldiers in considerable strength. As I have mentioned, the Abyssinian who bags an elephant, a rhinoceros, or even a giraffe gains a great deal of prestige in his own country. Consequently, the border stations where game is plentiful are much sought after. The temptation to cross the frontier in pursuit of game is one which few of the Abyssinians can resist. It was practically impossible for the East African authorities to prevent such inroads. They were very short of officers and men owing to the demands of the campaign in German East Africa, and the frontier is extremely difficult to patrol because the only large permanent supply of water east of Moyale lies in Abyssinian territory at Gaddaduma. If the Abyssinians had been content with poaching for game, the matter would not have been serious, but they usually maltreated the natives into the bargain. Time and again, the East African officials warned the Gurre and other tribes of the district not to make their



MALKA MURRI FORD, DAUA RIVER.



GASHI, ASHANAFI, AND WALDI GABRIEL.

villages close to the frontier, but in most cases the warnings were entirely useless. So strong is the conservatism of these people that they insist on living where their fathers and grandfathers have lived, preferring to take their chance of being robbed and oppressed by the Abyssinians rather than go elsewhere—an attitude which is utterly inexplicable to anyone who knows the god-forsaken, waterless character of their country.

Whenever a complaint about these forays was laid before an Abyssinian official, he would repeat the parrot-cry of 'Tigre'. (To avoid confusing the reader, I must explain parenthetically that, in this sense, 'Tigre' means robbers or outlaws, and has no reference to the country named Tigre in the north of Abyssinia.) It was true that there were bands of hunters scattered about, perhaps in larger numbers at this time than usual owing to the unsettled state of the country, but in most cases their activities were winked at by the Abyssinian soldiery. Moreover, the latter did not scruple to take the same liberty themselves when opportunity offered. Ill-fed and under-paid as they were, the men would have had to be saints to resist the temptation to loot and raid whenever they had the chance of doing so without being found out—and in my experience saints are no more plentiful in Abyssinia than in other countries.

About the time I returned from my trip to the Daua River, there was an epidemic of fires in Moyale village. As soon as a fire is discovered, the alarm is blown and everyone has to turn out. Late one night the alarm went and I rushed out with two of the officers. A shop was on fire in the village. As we approached the building explosion after explosion took place. 'Cartridges' we said to one another, at once proceeding with remarkable unanimity to take shelter behind a neighbouring wall, where each one

confessed that he had wanted to lie flat on the ground to escape the flying bullets. The explosions soon ceased, and finding that the outbreak had been suppressed we went back to bed. Next morning we discovered that the explosions had been, not cartridges but—sparklet bulbs !

At the time this incident occurred, I was staying at the British station at Moyale. A few days afterwards, I decided to go across to the Abyssinian side and try to establish a semi-permanent camp there, which would serve as my base until I could build the consulate at Mega Mountain, and which would be very useful even after that as a *pied-à-terre* for flying visits to Moyale. Fitaaurari Waldi's representatives made a fuss about my going back into Abyssinia, but my friend, Gerazmach Gashi, with whom I had maintained a constant correspondence since our first meeting, was now a much greater power in the land and smoothed away many difficulties. The reader will remember the trouble that Bokala and others made when I first came down and pitched my camp about ten minutes' walk from Waldi's house. This time they gave me a site in the village itself. I raised no objection, but pretended to be satisfied and at once started to build an enclosure. Of course, when the Abyssinians saw that I was digging myself in, they realised the disadvantages of having me in such close proximity, and were soon very anxious that I should move to my former camp—which was just what I wanted, for it was altogether a much better site. However, I knew that if I gave them an inkling of my real desires, I should have to stay where I was ; so whenever the question was raised, I told them I did not want to be so near but had placed my camp where it was simply to please them. Within a few weeks, by evincing not the slightest inclination to make a move, I gradually led them on to propose the shifting of my camp themselves, a suggestion with which I

closed immediately, chuckling to myself at the way they had walked into the trap.

One morning, at Moyale, while I was writing in my hut, my men came to me, and said that two lions had sprung out on to the mules while they were grazing, had seized one and dragged it into the bush. All this had happened by the side of the road quite near to the *boma*. I had never heard of an animal's being seized at this hour of the day, and I told the men it must be a mistake. However, they assured me that they had seen it all with their own eyes, and asked me to go and see for myself. Accordingly, taking my rifle, I accompanied them to the place where the incident had occurred. I soon had to admit that the men had spoken the truth, for there was a broad track through the bush, marked with traces of blood, where the lions had dragged the mule. I followed up the spoor till the bush became so dense that I had to crawl on my hands and knees. I went on very cautiously, when suddenly, as I turned a corner in the bush, I saw the remains of the mule and two lions close by. Alas, the lions disappeared in the twinkling of an eye, giving me no chance to fire. It was impossible to follow them up through the thick bush, so I returned to the camp for lunch. In the afternoon I went back to the same place, hoping to catch the lions finishing their meal. As I approached the spot, I heard the animals growling. The problem was how to get within sight without disturbing them—not an easy thing to do, as one could not get a field of vision of more than a few yards without exposing oneself completely. Taking the utmost precautions, I pushed slowly on in the direction of the growling, and eventually after much trouble I caught a glimpse of one of the lions in the bush. Unluckily, I was in a hopeless aiming position at that moment, the impenetrable jungle so restricting my movements that it was only with difficulty that I managed to

get the rifle to my shoulder at all. As a result, when I fired, the old lion went bounding away unhit. This is the only occasion in my experience when an animal has been carried off in the daytime; for, in spite of their reputation, lions are rarely bold enough to attack either man or beast in broad daylight.

Soon after this incident, news reached Moyale that Lij Yasu, the Prince Regent, had sent Fitaurari Ashanafi, one of his officers, down to the south on a tour of inspection. After much delay, Fitaurari Ashanafi reached Moyale early in February, 1916, with a large retinue of officers and men. Ashanafi did me the honour of calling on me first and was extremely polite and amiable. He was of very slender build but as hard as nails, and was travelling about at lightning speed, knocking up all the camels and giving my friend Gashi who accompanied him a very hard time indeed. He had pleasant features and charming manners, acquired doubtless from his palace training. We had a long talk together in my camp. I told him of all the difficulties that had been placed in my way by certain people, adding that I knew it was not by the desire of the Government, for I had always found the great Abyssinian Ministers and nobles most courteous. Fitaurari Ashanafi sympathised with me in the annoyance which had been put upon me, and assured me that, with Gerazmach Gashi and Kanyazmach Waldi Gabriel now in charge of the border, my troubles would be at an end.

When we had finished our conversation, we left together for the British camp, he and I riding alone with a large escort of Abyssinian soldiers both in front and at the rear. Where the road was narrow, he insisted on my riding in the track while he went into the bush. On the way he asked me whether Bulgaria had joined the Central Powers, whether we had yet forced the Dardanelles, and similar questions which showed a good grasp of the European situation.

When we got to the British camp, Kittermaster,¹ the officer in charge of the Northern Frontier District, had arranged an admirable reception, with the King's African Rifles and the police turned out as a guard of honour. The K.A.R. were put through their drill, which pleased and interested Ashanafi highly, as he had not seen anything of the sort before. Then we all went indoors and had a long official talk upon border questions. Ashanafi explained that he had not any powers to settle big questions, but undertook to report everything on his return to Addis Ababa, hoping at the same time that under the new régime there would be no further trouble. After the conference we all sat down to an excellent lunch which Kittermaster had had prepared. This was probably the largest luncheon party in all the history of Moyale. After the meal we took some photographs, and then Ashanafi and I rode back together. He came to my camp again to say good-bye and accepted a gun as a memento of his visit and a sign of our friendship.

I was vastly pleased with the results of Fitaurari Ashanafi's visit. He had gone out of his way again and again to be polite, insisting, for instance, that I should mount before he got on his mule. All these points were noted by the local people who had been doing their best to make things too uncomfortable for me. The manner in which Ashanafi treated me made them realise that a British Consul was a more important personage (if I may say so with due humility) than they had imagined; my prestige rose tremendously. Simultaneously with the inundations of visitors my stock of liquor began to vanish, and by the time Ashanafi left, my camp was as dry as if a plague of locusts had descended upon it.

Ever since my arrival in the country I had been working hard—six hours on an average a day—at

¹ Mr. H. B. Kittermaster, C.M.G., O.B.E., now Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Somaliland Protectorate.

Galla, the language which will take one over practically the whole of Abyssinia and a good deal of the country to the south and south-east as well. By this time, after a year's study, I had become proficient enough to carry on a conversation without an interpreter. Obviously it is essential to be able to do this in case one's interpreter should fall sick or get killed or turn out untrustworthy. Interviewing members of the Abyssinian aristocracy, however, is no picnic. I notice that I have described every conversation recorded so far in this book as 'long'. The word is inadequate. A chief will come to see you and sit for hours and hours, discoursing upon anything under the sun and consuming all the whisky you care to put in front of him. With an interpreter to help out the conversation, the ordeal is bad enough, but when you have to do it all yourself the strain is terrific. You have to be very tactful so as not to tread on any of your guest's corns, and very discreet so as not to disclose anything you do not want him to know. After an hour and a half you seem to have exhausted all conceivable topics of conversation, you rack your mind for something fresh, and as likely as not you light upon some such subject as flying machines or bi-metallism, which your guest would not understand even if you could find words in the language to express your meaning. Then, in desperation, you say 'Have another drink', and away goes another strong peg from your last bottle of whisky. The only consolation is the hope that, as there is no more liquor, your next visitor will stay only two hours instead of three.

Shortly after Fitaurari Ashanafi's visit to Moyale, I received permission to go to Marsabit Mountain to hunt elephants. Marsabit is in British territory, six or seven days' journey from Moyale across the Dido Galgalla, a stony, shadeless, and absolutely waterless plain. One has to use camel transport and carry all the water required in tanks. I took with me, in

addition, one mule, which received only one bucket of water every other day. Just before reaching Marsabit, I met two runners proceeding as hard as they could go to Moyale with the sad news that the garrison at Serenli had been overwhelmed and destroyed by the Aulihan Somalis. It is simply wonderful how the Somali police do these journeys. They go through the long thirst as if it was nothing at all, and keep up a remarkably quick pace.

Marsabit Mountain stands out of the great desert like an island covered with forests. One suddenly passes from the flaming waste into the cool shade of beautiful trees, with a carpet of luscious turf to ease the feet, and one's mind goes back to deer forests in Scotland. On the top of the mountain there is a large lake. By February all the pools of water in the desert which are filled during the rains dry up, and the elephants are driven to frequent Marsabit to drink. At the time of my visit, the place was teeming with buffalo, rhinoceros, and elephant; in fact, there was far too much game to make hunting pleasant.

The first night in the forest, it is no exaggeration to say that, just as I was about to sit down to supper, I could see between thirty and forty buffaloes crossing the track less than a hundred yards from my camp. I did not shoot for fear of disturbing the elephants and spoiling the morrow's sport. In due course we turned in, and very delightful it was after the stony plains we had so recently traversed. In the middle of the night I was wakened by yells from my servants, and on getting up I discovered that a rhinoceros had charged right through the camp, fortunately hurting nobody. It was an eerie experience in the pitch darkness, with rhinoceros and lions all around and elephants audibly drinking close by. I set men on watch the rest of the night, and next day had a strong zareba built, as a rhinoceros has an unpleasant habit of charging a conspicuous object like a white tent.

In the morning I went out with my men after elephants. Rhinoceros were as thick as flies. Two of them appeared in the middle of the path about ten yards ahead of us, and as they paid no heed to a polite request to get out of the way I was forced to shoot the first one, which luckily had a very fine head. Even then the other refused to budge until I fired at him. We passed through the thick forest, and then skirted its edge. Presently, in the distance we saw several elephants browsing on the open plain. We went towards them, taking care to prevent their getting our wind, and eventually came within two or three hundred yards of them. Here I hid the porters in some bushes and went on alone to pick out my beast. There were three of them, one with small tusks and the others with quite presentable ones, and they were browsing, entirely unsuspicious, down a small gully. I was shooting at that time with a double-barrelled '600 cordite rifle. I approached to a distance of about fifty yards, and then had a shot at the biggest elephant, hitting him just behind the shoulder. Immediately the beasts heard the report, they wheeled round and tore across the plain at full gallop. As they passed me, I had a second shot and actually heard the plop of the bullet as it struck. To my surprise, the elephant which I had twice hit did not fall but went straight on, and I thought I had lost him. However, we hastily followed up the spoor until we reached a ravine, where we saw all three elephants running on ahead. Suddenly, as we watched, the one I had hit staggered and fell right over with a crash. When we got up to him, he lay stone dead.

I do not think I am inclined to be squeamish, and I should not associate myself with those humanitarians who care more for the 'rights' of animals than for the needs of human beings; but I confess that the sight of the great brute lying dead before me gave me cause to think. Looking at the huge

carcase, which but a few minutes ago was the very embodiment of life and strength, and then at the tusks which seemed so small beside it, I felt as though I had committed something very near to crime. However, in nine cases out of ten one shoots elephants for pecuniary profit rather than for pleasure.

It was not long before the porters arrived with their axes, and began to chop out the tusks. Meanwhile I sat down and had my breakfast. This chopping-up process takes a considerable time before it is all completed; it is the part I most object to in elephant shooting. But once the tusks are cut out and loaded up on the porters, I always find that displeasure gives way to a lively sense of satisfaction as I trudge back to camp with the day's trophies.

The next morning we again left camp very early, but kept to the forest this time instead of going out on the plains. We had not gone far when we almost walked into a cow elephant with a little calf. She was standing absolutely motionless in the forest, and must have been asleep, I think. We made a detour and did not disturb her. Shortly afterwards we heard elephants trumpeting, and upon going in the direction from which the noise came, we discovered a very large herd. Wherever one looked, one saw elephants, and all the time, as some disappeared in the forest, fresh ones kept arriving on the scene. There were too many for me to count accurately, but I should say there must have been between fifty and sixty. In this part of the forest there were numbers of ravines, and we followed the herd from one to another without coming up to it. I noticed that my men seemed nervous and were not keen to continue the chase. In the light of what happened, I am not surprised, for hunting elephants in Marsabit forest is too risky to be pleasant. I did not realise this at the time, and paid no attention to my men's fears. As we reached the top of one of the ravines, the

elephants made a turn and came slowly across our front in single file. I suddenly saw an elephant with magnificent tusks and ran as hard as I could through the trees to have a shot at him. I got, I suppose, within twenty yards and then fired both barrels. I certainly heard the bullets hit; it was impossible to miss at that distance. However, it did not stop him, and I had too many things to think about immediately afterwards to speculate about his fate. As I fired, the whole herd, instead of running away, turned round and tore down on us, screaming and shrieking with rage. I thought my number was up and wished I had never seen or heard an elephant. Luckily, I kept my head, and jumped into a small bush which was handy. It was only a slender little tree, but sufficient to hide me for the time being. I had hardly done this before two elephants passed on my right within a few feet. Then, almost immediately, a third appeared, charging straight for my bush. I let him have both barrels, and he turned off to the left. For the next four or five minutes I saw nothing but these great beasts rushing past at top speed. I kept quite still in the bush, much too frightened to do anything. I had a horrible sensation of utter helplessness, as I realised that even with a '600 express it is impossible to stop an elephant at close quarters. One might as well try to stop a runaway locomotive with a pea-shooter.

When the elephants had all passed by, my men began to return one by one. They had climbed up into the trees like monkeys. My gun-bearer, however, had disappeared, which was not to be wondered at. The elephant which had so nearly got me we found close by. He was nearly dead, and we soon finished him off. But the big tusker that I had shot at first we could not find, nor could we see any spoor with signs of blood. I suppose that I must have hit him very high up in the body and not given him a mortal



CUTTING OUT THE TUSKS.



wound. We spent the rest of the day searching for this animal, but we could find nothing but rhinoceros, of which the forest seemed to be full. By the time we returned to camp we had all had our fill of elephant and rhinoceros. Two of my boys, whom I had lost in the forest, came in very late and scared to death, saying they had been chased by elephants.

The next day I rested. In the evening I sent out two of the men to the carcass of the rhinoceros which I had shot two days before to see whether there was any lion spoor in the vicinity. Upon returning they reported that, when they had reached the place, they had seen two lions actually eating the carcass. As can be imagined, I was extremely annoyed and disappointed at missing this opportunity, but it was a merited punishment for my laziness in not going out myself.

I was not satisfied with the tusks I had got, so after the day's rest I went out once more to hunt elephant. Soon after leaving camp, I found a fine old bull browsing by himself on the plain. I got up within firing distance easily enough, and secured him with a lucky shot. Even then, although hit in a vital spot, he ran for fully a hundred yards before he dropped. Personally I have always used the heart shot instead of the brain shot. The great objection to the former seems to be that, however accurate, it seldom brings an elephant down immediately, whereas with a brain shot the animal falls dead in his tracks. Of course, the advantage of the heart shot is that it gives you more confidence, as it does not seem nearly so difficult as the smaller target afforded by the brain.

Almost immediately the elephant was dead, vultures began to congregate in a most uncanny manner from every point of the compass, and within five minutes there were literally hundreds of these birds, sitting all round the carcass and not daring to approach

while my men were cutting out the tusks. As soon as they had finished, the vultures swooped down upon the carcase, covering it completely. There has been some controversy upon the question whether vultures find carcases by sight or by scent. In my view the question admits of only one answer. When we visited the remains of the elephant which I had shot in the forest the day before, there was not a single vulture near it, and the carcase was practically in the same state as we had left it. Surely, if the vultures hunted by scent, they would have discovered this animal. I have noticed the same thing with other animals that I have shot. When they are brought down in the open, the vultures gather at once, but in thick forests the carcases remain untouched for days.

I suppose there is no place in the world which so nearly resembles a hunter's paradise as Marsabit forest. The elephants there sometimes reach an enormous size. The four tusks which I had been lucky enough to get weighed altogether 240 lb., but Colonel Barrett, I believe, once bagged a pair of tusks weighing over 200 lb. Besides elephant, there are lions and plenty of rhinoceros, buffalo, and the smaller antelopes. I also saw prodigious numbers of giraffe, but of course did not shoot any.

On the way back from Marsabit over the Dido Galgalla, I again had bad luck with lions. One morning as I was going along with my caravan, I remembered that I had left something behind at the last camp, and sent one of my boys to fetch it. He was only away about a quarter of an hour, yet he met two lions quite close to the track. Later the same day I passed two mail runners, who had had one of their camels attacked and eaten during the night, but they were lucky and shot the lion. This only shews how much the element of chance enters into lion-shooting.

When I reached Moyale once more, I found that my carefully laid schemes for establishing semi-

permanent quarters on the site of my first camp, just outside the Abyssinian village, had come to nothing. I described earlier in this chapter how I chuckled when I got the Abyssinians to propose my removing thither. Almost immediately after this I had set out for Marsabit, leaving behind some of my men to build a house and an enclosure. The work was to be completed during my absence, and I was looking forward with unalloyed pleasure to the prospect of having tolerably decent quarters with room to turn round in after more than a year of the restrictions and discomforts of camping. Picture my dismay, therefore, when I returned to find that the local officials had interfered and stopped everything. The trouble came from the anti-British faction who took their cue from Fitaurari Waldi and were determined to prevent me from building a consulate anywhere in the south if they possibly could. Both Fitaurari Ashanafi and Gerazmach Gashi had given me permission to move my camp and put up huts and a fence on the new site; but as soon as they left, Waldi's representative at Moyale interfered and ordered my men to stay in the old camp. There was no real head, and each petty official played his own game and the most energetic (or the biggest bully) succeeded. Gashi's man was a weakling with no authority, and all the rest were either hostile to me or else sitting on the fence. The result was that Waldi's man had things pretty much his own way during my absence, and my new huts were not built. There was nothing to do but take the disappointment with philosophic resignation.

The question, however, was shelved for a time by my receiving instructions to return to Addis Ababa on official business. This was welcome news for all my party. I myself was glad to have the opportunity of visiting the sole dentist in Abyssinia (and incidentally of keeping my eye in at polo), and my

men were anxious to rejoin their wives and relations for a short spell. When I engaged them, I told them that I should probably be away about a year. They had worked well and loyally in spite of many a rough passage with illness and hard trekking. In fact they had far exceeded my expectations, and I did not want to run the risk of losing them, as I might have done if compelled to keep them away from their homes much longer. Good men are not easy to get, and once you have them it pays to keep them.

I returned to Addis Ababa in quick time by the main route through Sidamo. On such a journey one can cut the baggage down to what is actually required and yet travel fairly comfortably, for there is no need—as there is on some journeys—to carry large reserves of food and water. My caravan was a light one, consisting of three mules for myself and three for my men. Our only trouble was that, as the dry season was nearly at an end, there was practically no grass at all along the main caravan route. However, we managed to buy enough barley *en route* to keep the mules in fair condition, and reached Addis Ababa without incident early in April, 1916.

CHAPTER VI

SECOND JOURNEY SOUTH

Life at the Legation—first meeting with Ras Tafari—second journey south—organisation and equipment of a caravan—through Arusi and Bale—hunting mountain nyala—grottoes of the Webbe River—across the Arana Mountains—through Sidamo, Amaro, Alga, and Burji to Mega Mountain.

OFFICIAL calls, visits to the dentist, polo, and lawn tennis were the main items of the daily round during my stay in Addis Ababa. The life was pleasant, and not altogether uneventful. The Italian Legation, for example, was twice attacked by robbers, and on the second occasion the Minister, Count Colli, narrowly escaped with his life. He was reading in bed late at night when he heard a shot under his window. He went to look out and saw two men there. He asked what they were doing, and in reply they fired at him, missing him by a miracle. The Count ran round to the front door, where another man who was lying in wait shot at him through the door but also missed. A free fight then took place in the grounds, but unfortunately, in the darkness and confusion, all the would-be murderers made good their escape. The whole affair, we suspected, was a put-up job, probably engineered by Turkish and German agents.

While I was in Addis Ababa, the Abyssinian Easter was celebrated, and the European Legations attended the ceremony in full force. The highest ecclesiastical dignitary of the country, the *Abuna*, was present with a large number of priests, whose chief part, it appeared, was to dance in a slow, methodical

way, chanting songs about the Passion. The music is simple, but to the western ear not very pleasing. As soon as the dance is finished, the *Abuna* distributes rushes to all present. The Abyssinians tie these rushes round their heads, a custom which, needless to say, the members of the diplomatic corps were much too dignified to follow.

In Abyssinia, the fixed feasts like Christmas fall thirteen days later than those of western Europe. Easter is usually a week later, but is subject to the calculations of Alexandria. The number of the year is eight or seven (owing to the different New Year's Days) behind the Gregorian. The year begins on 11th September, and is divided into twelve months of thirty days each. The remaining five days (six in every fourth year, leap-year) are interpolated at the end of the year. This method is doubtless not ideal, but it seems to me both simpler and more convenient than our own practice of juggling with months of thirty and thirty-one days (with one of twenty-eight or twenty-nine thrown in occasionally to add to the confusion).

During this visit to Addis Ababa, I had the pleasure of meeting Ras Tafari, then a Dajazmach, for the first time. From the moment I saw him I took a liking to him. In appearance he is of middle height, slightly built, with finely chiselled hands and feet. He is now the Heir-Apparent to the Ethiopian throne, and I suppose few men have a more difficult task than he has. He is anxious, I think, for his country to march with the times and take its place side by side with the European Powers. To educate the ordinary Abyssinian chiefs to this pitch is no easy matter. What was good enough for their fathers is good enough for them; and they look with suspicion on what we are pleased to call civilisation. Perhaps they are right, for to them civilisation means railways, telegraphs, and the like, which, after all, have not added greatly to the happiness of the world. The last

time I saw the Ras he was in his own house in Addis Ababa. He has made an approach and a garden on European lines, and employs a former general of the Russian army as head gardener. His rooms, or at any rate those I saw, were furnished just as they would be in an English home. He had one beautifully-made table, which, when opened, produced a *tantalus* of spirits and cigars. I must confess that I envied him the possession of this, for it was of exquisite workmanship. On his mantelpiece, at each side of a clock, I noticed photographs in silver frames of our own King and Queen.

After spending nearly two months in the capital, I set out again on 3rd June, 1916, intending this time to travel through the provinces of Arusi and Bale on my way south.

My caravan consisted of pack-mules. Pack-donkeys are also often used, but they are much smaller than the mules, and in wet weather their small feet stick in the mud, rendering them almost useless. The golden rule for travelling is to avoid heavy loads. It may be stated in books that a mule will carry 160 lb. in a quick caravan and 220 lb. in an ordinary caravan. In my opinion these weights are only suitable for the main routes under good conditions. If one wishes to go into the wilds and travel quickly, about 100 lb. is the right weight. Before starting, each mule's load is divided into two equal portions, which should take the form, if possible, of waterproof rectangular packages, measuring roughly $21 \times 24 \times 18$ inches. These packages are tied together and placed one on each side of the pack-saddle. Long strips of hide (*machanya*) are next passed over the load and round the mule's body several times. The two loaders draw these tight and fasten them securely—a very necessary precaution owing to the steep and rocky character of most of the tracks. It is impossible to take too much care to see that the pack-saddles fit

exactly, for if this is neglected, a sore back is the result. Seldom will an Abyssinian take any trouble to prevent this where other people's mules are concerned unless he is strictly watched. I myself prefer light English pack-saddles, and donkey panniers which hook on on each side. The panniers are light and easy to load. When buying a pack-mule, it is always advisable to make the seller produce a guarantee that it is not a stolen one. If a mule's back swells up at all, the Abyssinians throw it, and then apply red-hot irons to the place. This is an abominably cruel practice, but it seems to effect a cure remarkably quickly. As a rule, one loading man is required for two mules. Therefore, with a caravan of thirty mules, the correct complement of loading men would be fifteen and one extra as herdsman. Among these I include my headman, who is responsible for all the loads and who loads with the rest. The Abyssinians use very light calico tents, one of which I generally take for every four men. The chiefs, however, have large tents, circular in form and high at the sides, which are both light and extremely comfortable. Latterly I have always used one of these myself in preference to heavy English tents.

I have learnt by experience that it is a good plan to take bullocks, sheep, and goats on trek. This ensures fresh meat for yourself and your men, and a few milch goats will give enough milk for your tea and coffee. The animals get wonderfully tame, and after a few nights they will stay with the mules and not wander away. The little mountain sheep are very hardy and travel better than goats in the mountainous districts.

Getting a caravan away from Addis Ababa is a trying business. Something invariably happens to cause delay. People want to arrest one of your men for debt or robbery, another one's wife selects that most inopportune moment for departing this life,

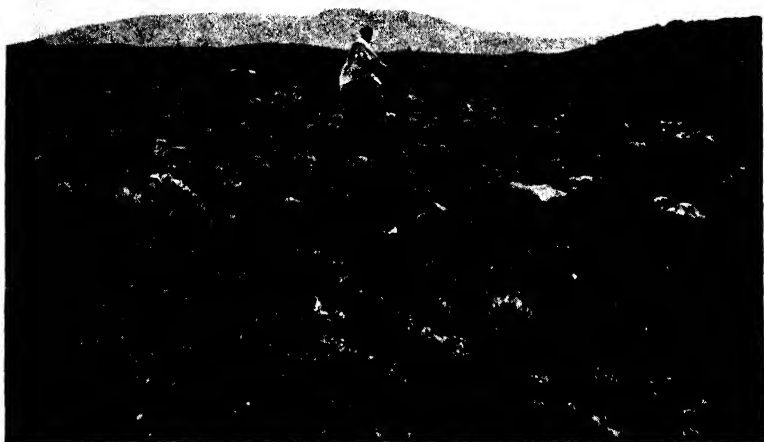
and so on. I always heave a sigh of relief when I get a caravan off and see the capital fading away behind me. This time I sent the caravan on ahead of me to the Awash River. I caught it up there and found the river in flood. Luckily we discovered a couple of canoes in which we ferried the kit over, the mules of course swimming.

From the Awash River there are two routes through Arusi to Ginir in the Bale province, one through Siri and the other over Chilalo Mountain. The former is the quicker and more generally used, but I decided to take the latter, which is less known and therefore of greater interest. Chilalo Mountain is ascended by gradual grassy slopes, over which small Galla villages are scattered. At the top there is a long plateau running between the two highest peaks, and on this plateau are several small lakes, the largest of which is called Chalalaka.

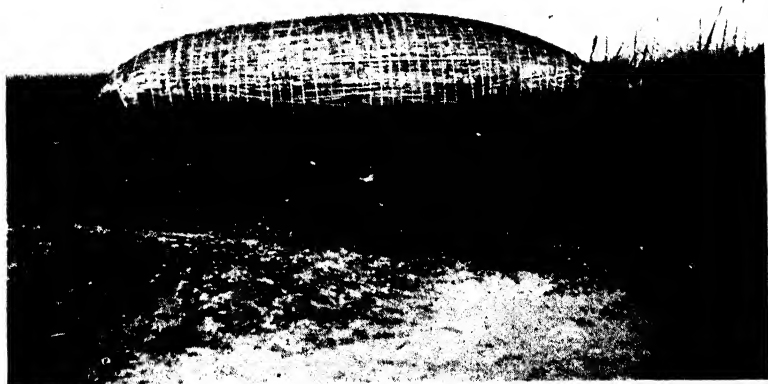
I was anxious to obtain one or two good specimens of the rare and little animal, called the mountain nyala or Buxton kudu, which appears to be found only in the Arusi and Bale provinces of Abyssinia and is threatened with extinction as the Abyssinians shoot everything without regard to sex. Chilalo Mountain was the first place I reached where this animal is found, so I camped for several days there in order to go hunting. My luck was out, for, although females were fairly numerous, I could not find a single male. I then went a little farther on, when I met a Galla who told me he knew a spot where they were plentiful. I pitched camp at the place he indicated, and going out next morning I had a splendid chance of securing a good specimen, but to my intense disgust I missed. This was entirely due to my own carelessness, as just before leaving Addis Ababa I had bought a new rifle which I had neglected to try, and I now found that the sights were not properly adjusted—a maddening misfortune, but thoroughly deserved. On the top

of these mountains it is always cold, and when it rains hunting becomes anything but a pleasure. The rains had now begun, and it looked as if I should have to give up the quest altogether. However, one morning, the weather cleared temporarily and I went out early. I had come to the hunting grounds, given the mules to my men to hold, and gone some way up a small rise, when I heard a man running behind me. He was very excited, and told me breathlessly that there were two nyala grazing quite unsuspectingly close to the mules. I hurriedly returned, and going very cautiously to the spot in question to my great joy I saw two males quietly taking their morning feed. One of them had a particularly fine head, and as the shot was quite an easy one I already considered that he was mine. But again my wretched rifle played me false, and I had the mortification of seeing this magnificent creature dash away unhit. Although I followed him for hours over dreadfully bad country, I never caught a glimpse of him again, and so I returned to my camp thoroughly tired, wet, and disgusted. While hunting nyala on Chilalo Mountain, I saw a herd of hartebeeste with white buttocks, which may possibly be a new species or sub-species. It is a well known fact that these animals like the hot, low-lying plains, and I was amazed to find them on the top of a high mountain, which is enveloped in mist more often than not and at times bitterly cold.

As I had a long journey in front of me, I could not afford any more time to stay hunting nyala on Chilalo Mountain, so I packed up and moved on. I had now given up all hopes of obtaining a specimen, for the Gallas all told me that there were plenty of ordinary kudu ahead but no nyala. Descending from Chilalo, we passed through Albaso, one of the most beautiful parts of Arusi, as Arusi is one of the most beautiful provinces of Abyssinia. The higher slopes resemble the Yorkshire moors, while the lower are cut up by



MOUNTED GALLA, CHILALO MOUNTAIN.



NATIVE HUT, ARUSI PROVINCE.

numerous deep ravines, well timbered and with clear streams dashing down the rocks in waterfalls. Below and beyond the ravines stretches a broad open plain. The country is sparsely populated, and there is little cultivation but plenty of stock. The Arusi natives were most friendly and pleasant, and assisted us in every way. They speak the Galla language and are Muhammedans. The huts they build bear a curious resemblance to a fallen airship. It is said that the people of Arusi give a good deal of trouble to the Abyssinians, who are frightened to settle there in small numbers although it is certainly one of the finest parts of Abyssinia.

Leaving Albaso, we travelled through open pastoral country, and descended between Mounts Horo and Kaka to the Wabi River, which forms the boundary between Arusi and Bale. The Wabi is a broad and swiftly running stream. We were just able to cross it at a ford called Wakene, where it is quite ninety yards wide. If we had been a few days later, we should not have been able to cross at all. We then climbed up the Lajo mountains by a precipitous path amid scenery of impressive beauty. In parts the path was so steep that a caravan which was coming down as we went up seemed almost as if it would fall on top of us. The summit of Lajo is bitterly cold, and when I pitched my camp there I was not very keen on hunting. The local natives again told me there were plenty of kudu about but no nyala, and as I had shot many of the former I did not want any more specimens. The next day I took my boy and went out to see for myself what game there was. I had only gone a short distance from the camp when I ran right into some nyala, and I found out afterwards that the neighbourhood was full of them and that there were no kudu at all. My bad luck still continued to dog me. Day after day I hunted in the pouring rain, perished with cold, but, try as I would, something or other always

seemed to crop up to prevent me from getting what I wanted. At last I was forced to leave with one poor specimen which I managed to shoot one afternoon.

Descending the mountains of Lajo, we crossed the Webbe River high up where it is still a small stream, and then debouched upon a wide plain which extends to Ginir. Scattered all over the plain are groups of a species of cactus, which are the more noticeable because the tree is evidently not indigenous. The Gallas told me that these trees were planted by their grandfathers when they first came to the country. With this exception, the plain is bare of trees. The sparseness of the population was again remarkable. The Governor of the province afterwards explained that this was due to three distinct misfortunes. First of all smallpox ravaged the country, then came the war with the Abyssinians in which the Gallas suffered heavily, and finally there was a severe famine. A certain amount of barley is grown, and stock-raising flourishes. The Gallas of Arusi and Bale are excellent horsemen, and they breed a hardy and useful stamp of pony. The small children gallop about fearlessly with no saddle and just a rope tied to the horse's head instead of a bridle.

Before reaching Ginir, we crossed the Webbe again at a ford called Qamale, which is the Galla name for a species of monkey found there. The river was about twenty yards broad at this point. A little lower down it flows through enormous ravines. I camped on the edge of one which must have been between 1,500 and 2,000 feet deep. Its sides were sheer precipices of rock. At the far end, a small waterfall leapt from top to bottom in a single drop. The bottom was wooded, with a stream winding its way through the forest. The cliffs were full of caves in which countless vultures had made their nests. As one stood on the edge of the chasm, silence reigned so profound that one could have imagined oneself in a country

of the dead, where nothing lived but the birds of prey, constantly soaring, alighting on the rocks, and soaring away again. It inspired in me a feeling of awe which I have never experienced anywhere else except in the great chasm below the Victoria Falls.

About an hour's distance from the town of Ginir, I was riding along far ahead of my caravan, when a messenger came up to announce that by order of the Governor an Abyssinian officer was approaching with an escort of two hundred soldiers to meet me. This was embarrassing, as I was very dirty and wearing an old suit of clothes. I had to send back one of my orderlies to the caravan at a gallop to bring on my uniform, and when he returned I went behind a bush and changed my clothes while the Fitaurari and his retainers waited a couple of hundred yards off. We then went on together to the camping place which had been prepared for me close to the Governor's residence on an eminence above the town. Ginir in itself is a small place, but it is the centre of trade in Bale, and large markets are held at frequent intervals to which flock the Gallas and the Somalis from the east. In former days it was the principal market in Central Abyssinia for salt, which was brought thither in enormous quantities from a place called El Nado in the Somali country a few days' journey to the east. With the opening of the railway to Addis Ababa, this trade has been killed by the importation of salt direct from Jibuti. Considerable quantities of cotton sheeting, shirts, and dyed goods are still imported, while the exports consist mainly of skins and hides and small quantities of wax and ivory.

Dajazmach Nado, who was then Governor of Bale, gave me a splendid reception. He lavished bullocks and sheep upon me, gave orders that my mules were to be replaced by his whenever they were tired, and on my departure provided first-rate guides

to take me through to Boran. Nado himself is one of the very few Abyssinians who have visited Europe. He is a pleasant man, and well-disposed towards Europeans. He entertained me to lunch one day and introduced me to his wife, who is reputed to have been one of the most beautiful women of Abyssinia in her day.

I had instructions to keep my ears and eyes open for any traces of Turko-German propaganda among the Moslems in these parts. I learnt that a certain sheikh, Hajji Muhammed Nur, had been sent down a short time previously by the Turkish consul in Harar to preach sedition. The Italian representative at Magalo succeeded on some pretext or other in enticing him down to Lugh, in Italian Somaliland, where he was immediately arrested by the Italian authorities and packed off to Mogadishu. By all accounts his mission was an utter failure, as the Gallas, unlike the Ogaden farther east, are not fanatical followers of the Prophet.

I left Ginir on 10th July and arrived at Magalo (or Gorobube) on the following day, first crossing a small, swift, shallow river called the Denek and then striking the Webbe River once more. A few miles from Magalo the Webbe flows straight through a mountain, entering a series of caverns on one side and passing out on the other after an underground course of over a mile. The grottoes of the Webbe River are undoubtedly one of the natural wonders of the world. To describe them, I cannot do better than quote the account given by Dr. A. Donaldson Smith.

‘On October the 25th we made a march of four hours south to the caves, describing many curves, and pitching towards the last part down a steep and rocky donkey path, very rough for the five camels to descend. What had appeared to me to be a level country now presented a most broken and rugged appearance; for far below us was a deep canyon

circling in a southerly direction, and connected with this were several smaller valleys. The view was superb. The pass was very rocky, but there was an absence of the thick, tangling thorn-bush so prevalent in Africa, this being replaced by rows of bushes resembling the English yew in shape, size, and the beautiful deep shiny green colour of its leaves, while forming picturesque groups at every turn were palm-trees, and many succulent shrubs, covered with beautiful flowering vines. Below us we could see the deep cut in the bottom of the valley but the water was not visible until we found ourselves immediately above it.

‘After nearly a mile of twisting and turning in our descent, we reached the edge of the precipice, at the bottom of which were the clear rushing waters of the river Webi two hundred feet below us. A little farther on, and we were at the water’s edge, where marvel after marvel presented itself. Balustrades and peristyles, huge columns and arches, looking as though they had been cut and carved by the Cyclops from mountains of pure white marble, broke the water’s course and lined its shores.

‘The manner in which the water had carved the rocks into such marvellous shapes was bewildering. There was a method about the whole scheme of columns, with their very ornate capitals, round symmetrical bodies, and splendid bases, that seemed to have emanated from the divine inspiration of a wonderful sculptor. We stood for a while contemplating the scene, and then passed under an arch and through a natural temple composed of a little group of columns of white translucent rock, supporting a roof of solid granite.¹

‘When we emerged at the other side, words could

¹ A specimen of the white rock which I brought back has been identified by Professor Heilprun, of the Academy of Natural Sciences, of Philadelphia, as coral limestone.

not express our astonishment. Our Somali boys, usually absolutely indifferent to beautiful scenery, could curb their enthusiasm no longer, but with one accord broke out into prayer, so thoroughly were they convinced that what they beheld was the work of God, and was intended to impress men with the greatness of his power.

‘The river broke around a little group of rocks, and joining again made a short dash, as it fell a couple of feet, and passed through the most superb archway it can be possible to imagine. The whole mountain appeared to be resting on a series of columns thirty to forty feet high and twenty to eighty feet apart, between which were spacious vaulted chambers, with their domes rising many feet higher; and then again many columns uniting formed long arched tunnels. Along the edge of the river, as it passed through the mountain, the columns occurred in masses, or occasionally only a few yards apart, their great bases forming a series of steps down to the water’s edge.

‘It was possible to enter the caverns through the large archway, but there was another entrance that could be better reached by climbing up a steep bank, and then passing between masses of rock to a hole in the mountain-side, like the opening to Rob Roy’s cave by Loch Lomond. This is the way the natives were accustomed to enter. You had to let yourself down carefully some twenty feet, until you found yourself in a large gloomy chamber, where natives had offered up sacrifices evidently for generations. There was an enormous fireplace on one side, over and about which were hung various offerings that had been made to Wak [‘God’, in Galla], consisting principally of wooden vessels, strings of cowry shells, sheepskins, and leather straps.

‘Lighting candles, we passed a hundred yards through the various archways and chambers, and then found we could go no farther on account of the

mountain's having caved in. The other side of the stream, however, continued quite open, but we could not cross, as the river was too deep and wide.

'The Abyssinian guide said it would be impossible to get any food here. We had seen no natives since leaving Illahni, where the inhabitants had pretended they were unable to feed us if we went to the caves; but the truth of the matter was, the Abyssinian was afraid of our going so far away, and ordered the natives not to allow us any food. . . . The next morning, after a hasty glance at the southern extremity of the cavern, we were obliged to start back, in spite of our desire to explore the caves at length. . . .

'After sending the camels ahead, Fred and I and a few boys skirted the mountain, which rises six hundred feet above the valley, to find the southern exit of the river. We found the stream rushing forth from its stony bed, after having carved a road for itself a mile long in an almost straight line south. At this opening there was a more rugged and grander series of chambers and arches than at the northern end, but the beautiful outlines were wanting. Just at the mouth of the cavern the river fell a few feet over a mass of broken arches. The mountain had been broken down somewhat, so as to form a semi-circle about the exit of the river; but all around, like radii from the central arch, were to be seen the tunnels, winding in all directions beneath the great arches forty feet high.

'No one who may in future years visit these caves will ever accuse me of having exaggerated their wonderful beauty.'¹

Among the natives wild superstitions are attached to this place. They believe that huge pythons and lions and uncanny creatures of the imagination live there. This could not be true of lions, but it is

¹ A. Donaldson Smith, M.D., F.R.G.S., *Through Unknown African Countries*, pp. 83-91 (London and New York, 1897).

quite possible that large snakes may be found there. Certainly, when one is inside, it is easy to picture hobgoblins peering at one from behind the great pillars. The cavern is nearly pitch-dark and therefore rather difficult to photograph when one has no flashlight apparatus. I lit a candle, opened the shutter of my Kodak, and closed it again after a few minutes; the result far surpassed anything I could have hoped for, though it gives but a faint impression of the magnificence of the sight.

The Webbe must not be confounded with the Wabi: they are two entirely separate rivers. The Webbe rises in the Arana mountains, and the Wabi close to Lake Awasa. All this part of Abyssinia is full of streams, and large tracts of land could be irrigated at comparatively little cost.

I stayed a few days at Magalo under the hospitable roof of Count Bestagno, who was in charge of the Italian station there. Here I turned back in a westerly direction, crossed the Mane River several times with difficulty and even danger as the stream was swollen by the rains, passed one small town called Goro, and so reached Goba, a considerable garrison town, fully six times as large as Ginir, beautifully situated at the foot of the Arana mountains. The Abyssinian officer in command here gave me a good reception, and entertained me to an excellent lunch.

The Arana mountains are almost unexplored, and I was therefore anxious to go over them. I was warned against this by the Abyssinian chiefs, who assured me that the cold was so intense that it would kill my mules. In spite of this counsel, I left Goba on 24th July, and after a hard climb reached the top. Unfortunately I had not my aneroid with me and am thus unable to give the exact height. But as Goba is higher than Addis Ababa (7,872 feet above sea-level), and the mountains tower above Goba, it is certainly considerable. On the summit was a



GROTTOES OF THE WEBBE RIVER.



large treeless plateau, terribly cold and bleak. When the clouds cleared—which was not often—the views were gorgeous. Down the huge precipices numerous small waterfalls played, and one could see for immense distances. We hurried on as fast as we could through a succession of minor storms of rain and hail, and then started to descend the other side. Here we were caught in heavy rains, all the streams became swollen torrents, impossible to cross, and to add to the general depression a mist like a London fog enveloped us day after day. In one thing only did I have any cause for satisfaction: I found numbers of mountain nyala, and was at last lucky enough to shoot a really good specimen. Since all the rivers between us and the Ganale would under these conditions be full and impassable, I decided to skirt the mountains and then recross them so as to strike the main track from Goba to Abara. As soon as the rain permitted, I put this plan into execution, and in a short time we were again toiling up the mountain side by a path which I should have said would have been absurd for a mule to attempt. To my amazement the mules managed it, and I honestly believe that if I asked those same animals to climb the Nelson Column they would do it. Two of them fell and rolled over and over like teetotums till they were brought to a standstill by a friendly rock with their loads underneath and their feet sticking up in the air; but even these unfortunates succeeded in getting to the top at the second attempt. I was very nervous at this point, for if we had been caught in heavy rain we should have been unable either to advance or to retreat. Later that very day, when we had safely crossed the mountain close to a peak called Dima, a terrific storm of rain and hail occurred which gave the mountain-top the appearance of a snowfield.

With the exception of a few days at Ginir and Magalo, we had had continual rain ever since leaving

Addis Ababa. From the information given me, I was under the impression that climatic conditions would be much better after we crossed the Arana mountains, but never was mortal more deceived. The plain was not a whit better than the high plateau. The rain beat down on us pitilessly, and the country was one mass of rivers, swamps, and black mud. From the foot of the Arana mountains to the boundary of Bale and Sidamo, I should say at a conservative estimate that we forded forty rivers. All of us suffered from exposure, but the men stuck to their work pluckily and got the animals through without accident. Some time previously I had been compelled to dismiss my cook because he was so dirty, and had been unable to find a competent man to take his place. Consequently I suffered almost as much internally as externally during this execrable journey. I see from my notes that we passed through one town called Dodolo, and another called in Amharic Arbighona and in Galla Yeyi, entered the province of Sidamo, and reached Abara on 18th August; but all that I remember of the landscape is rain and mud.

In Sidamo we struck the main trade route to the south, a more or less respectable road. In contrast with my former visit, I was received with friendliness instead of suspicion. Every chief came out to meet me, my camp was inundated with food, and sometimes the people were even set to cut the grass in front of me. As the road was about forty yards (not feet) wide, one can imagine the labour this last honour entailed; indeed, in a way it was pitiful, for the grass would be just as high again in a fortnight. A new kind of excitement, however, awaited us, for we learnt that this road was infested with brigands and that in the past twelve months no fewer than 230 persons had been murdered on the main road alone. Some parts were so dangerous that *nagādeis* (traders) would not venture along them with a single caravan, but



MOUNTAIN NYALA.

(Now in Viscount Leverhulme's collection at Port Sunlight.)

insisted on waiting for others, with the result that we passed caravans drawn out miles in length. It was a common sight also to see the bodies of robbers hanging in trees; in one village there were as many as eight dangling from a single tree. We passed through the danger zone without incident, thanks in all probability to the fact that the bandits knew we were better armed than they; but one of my men whom I sent this way with a message the following month was not so fortunate. He was fired on by robbers concealed in the forest, and the bullet passed through his clothes, missing his stomach by an inch. He had the presence of mind to fall flat on the ground at once, and having three cartridges in the magazine of his rifle he was able to return the fire of his assailants, who thereupon decamped.

Before leaving Sidamo, I took the opportunity of visiting the little known districts of Amaro, Alga, and Burji. A short distance from the south-eastern corner of Lake Margherita begins a long mountain-range which runs in a southerly direction. Although very narrow, this range rises to a great height, some of its peaks reaching an altitude of nearly 11,500 feet. Amaro, Alga, and Burji are situated on these mountains in the order given from north to south. We ascended the north-eastern corner. The Abyssinians told us that we could not take mules up, but we were just—and only just—able to do so. The ascent is almost a precipice, and nothing on four feet but an Abyssinian mule could get up it. The path, often no more than eighteen inches in width, threads its way up the mountain with a sheer drop of many hundreds of feet in some places. Two of the mules fell over the precipice and were killed—the only animals I have lost in this way in all my travels, notwithstanding the appalling routes I have followed. Once the top is reached, the travelling over the fine grass plateau presents no great difficulties. Amaro, Alga, and

Burji had been sadly devastated quite recently, and very few natives were left there. The responsibility for this rests with a former Governor of Sidamo, named Ato Finkabo, who appears to have carried on a very flourishing business in slaves from these parts. In fact he became so enterprising that most of the natives who were left fled to Konso and Boran to escape falling into his clutches. Centuries ago this country was Christian and the remains of some old churches are still to be seen, but after Muhammed Grang, the Moslem conqueror, laid it waste in the early sixteenth century, the people reverted to paganism.¹

From Burji I went through Karayo direct to Mega Mountain, where I arrived early in October after four months of travelling in the wilds during the worst season of the year. There was only one thing on which I could congratulate myself: wherever I went, my reception was genuinely cordial and friendly. My presence in the country, it seemed, was no longer regarded as an insult and an affront to the feelings of everyone who prided himself on the name of Ethiopian. The crucial test, however, was still to come: should I be able without opposition to put up permanent buildings for my Consulate?

¹ Muhammed Grang was killed in 1542.

CHAPTER VII

THE HOUSING PROBLEM AND AN EVICTION

Sidelights on Abyssinian character—attempt to establish the Consulate at Mega—I am thwarted and hasten back to Gardula—Gerazmach Woyessa assigns me his own houses at Mega—I enter into occupation—a bolt from the blue—re-enter Bokala—I return in haste to Addis Ababa—incidents of the journey north.

MEGA Mountain was the place which we had had in view all along as the site of the consulate for Southern Abyssinia. It is situated about 70 miles north-west of Moyale, but the Anglo-Abyssinian boundary approaches within 25 miles. It is a mountain which is conspicuous for many miles. Near its summit there is a huge grass plateau elevated above the rolling plains of Boran. Its slopes are covered with juniper forests, through which trickle many pleasant streams. Unfortunately, the Abyssinians are chopping down the beautiful forests for building purposes and clearing the land for cultivation. Since the Abyssinians conquered Boran in 1899, the importance of Mega has rapidly increased, and it is undoubtedly destined to become the capital of the province. Abyssinians have settled there in considerable numbers, building houses, cultivating grain, and destroying the forests with their usual reckless improvidence. Mega has also developed as a centre of trade, especially in salt from a crater at Sogida (= 'salt', in Galla) close by. This place is really wonderful. You proceed along a flat plain, where there is nothing to notice but a few small hillocks. Suddenly, when you come to the hillocks, you are

on the edge of a huge crater which drops down hundreds of feet quite sheer. There is a winding path to the bottom. This is practicable for donkeys, which go down and bring up small loads of salt. There is also another salt crater to the south-west of Mega very similar in size and shape, called Mogado.

One of the principal objects of my visit to Addis Ababa earlier in 1916 had been to obtain explicit authority from Fitaurari Hapta Georgis to build the consulate at Mega. The last sentence must be read with all the emphasis on the word 'explicit', because Abyssinia is a country where you can only do exactly what you are authorised to do over the seal of the person who has power in the particular case, whatever it may be. Otherwise you immediately come up against the innate obstructionism of the native official and his intense suspicion of everybody else, especially foreigners. The best illustration I can give is to quote an incident recounted by my friend, Mr. Gerald Campbell, who was on the staff of the British Legation at Addis Ababa for several years and is now Consul-General in San Francisco. The Abyssinians at one time had the idea of using the natural resources of the country to make their own cartridges. There happened to be an Australian prospector on the spot, and they thought they would send him to a place where copper had been reported and get him to say whether it would be good enough for them to use at the Government cartridge factory. They gave him a passport to proceed to this place without hindrance. He went there and began digging, but the local officials at once stopped him and said: 'You are allowed to proceed here without hindrance, but you are not allowed to dig.' A message was sent back to the capital, a month away, asking for permission for him to dig; the authorities, after thinking it over for a month, gave the desired permission, which reached the man after yet another month had elapsed.

He again began to dig and saw some promising specimens, which he put into his pocket to smelt in his tent. This action did not escape the watchful eyes of the local officials, who immediately arrested him and took him a journey of several months round northern Abyssinia, because they said he was allowed to dig but not to take anything away.

Although this trait in an Abyssinian official's character is highly exasperating, it is not without justification. If he departs from the written word of a letter or permit and any trouble ensues, the chief who issued the letter or permit will not support his subordinate, but will accuse him of perfidy or corruption, with the result that the wretched person in question will be arrested, detained for many months, perhaps in chains, and despoiled of his property.

Dealing with people who were capable of this kind of thing, I knew that I could do nothing without permission in full and proper form. We discussed the matter of the Consulate while I was in Addis Ababa, and Fitaurari Hapta Georgis finally agreed to give orders to Gerazmach Woyessa (who had been placed in charge of Boran while Fitaurari Waldi went up to the capital to answer various charges against him) to build a house for me wherever I should find it convenient. I was to pay rent for the house to Hapta Georgis, who pointed out that, as I had no men of my own who could do the actual construction, it would be better for him to settle the matter in this way. In all probability, the idea at the back of his mind was that this method would attract less attention, and be easier to explain away if opposition arose. I was not altogether satisfied, because everything now depended on whether Hapta Georgis would give, and Woyessa would receive and follow, the orders we had agreed upon. However, this was as far as the Fitaurari was prepared to go at the moment, so I had to be content and hope for the best.

On my arrival at Mega at the beginning of October, 1916, I found an admirable site for my camp, near to the village yet sufficiently removed for privacy, in a little wood with beautiful timber and an ample supply of drinking water from a running spring close by. Some of the trees by which I pitched my camp are holy to the Boran, and at certain seasons they come here to worship. This happened several times during my stay. They used to start singing in the plain some distance off and approach the trees, dancing to the rhythm of their song. Beneath the sacred trees, they would sing and pray, and at times they would kill a bullock and sprinkle the trees with its blood. They rubbed all their clothes in the earth, and took some of it and tied it up in their clothing. They invariably slept there all night and departed early next morning. This ceremony, I believe, has some connection with ancestor-worship.

The spot suited my purpose in every way, and I was feverishly anxious to get buildings put up at the earliest possible moment. The Abyssinians at Mega seemed pleased to see me back and received me well. They inspected and approved of my camp and raised no objection to my making a kraal for my animals. In addition, they gave me a pass to bring some baggage which I had left at Moyale. Gerazmach Woyessa, however, was at Gardula, and as far as I could learn had no intention of visiting Mega. When I approached the local officials upon the question of building, they began the inevitable game of procrastination and obstruction: they could not allow me to build because I could shew no authority, they had received no instructions from Woyessa to let me build or to build for me themselves. By this time I had had enough experience of Abyssinians not to be surprised at their attitude. As I had thought all along, the only thing that would enable me to go ahead was a letter over the seal of Fitaurari

Hapta Georgis. To be effective, the letter would need to be at one and the same time sufficiently general and sufficiently detailed. If it said merely that Woyessa was to build me a house, the people at Mega would act on the Abyssinian proverb that 'a dog knows his master, but not his master's master', and refuse to do anything without Woyessa's authority in addition. Moreover, if only a house were mentioned, they would probably prevent me from putting up a shack for a kitchen or a stable. Unless the letter said specifically that I could choose the site, I should be told 'Yes, we will build the house, but first get a note from the Fitaurari telling us exactly where to put it'. Again, if all these possibilities were anticipated, I might be delayed for weeks unless I was empowered to start my own men building.

With these points in mind, I decided to write to the British Minister at Addis Ababa, suggesting that he should ask Hapta Georgis to be good enough to send me the letter which follows :

From Fitaurari Hapta Georgis, Minister for War,
etc.

To Gerazmach Woyessa and the officers in Boran.

How are you ? Thank God, I am well.

You will build for the English Government Consul in the place where he is or the place which he chooses the houses he wants. These are to be built well and are to be my property, and the English Minister will pay rent for them. Mr. Hodson's men can also help in the building ; do not hinder them. On receipt of this note, start this work at once.

(Seal of Fitaurari Hapta Geargis)

I sent off the despatch containing this suggestion on 14th October. Everything seemed satisfactory, and I therefore made arrangements to go to Moyale

for my other baggage while awaiting the reply from the capital. Meanwhile all the officers of importance left Mega. This should have made me suspicious, as it was evident they all had left for some reason. As I found out afterwards, they did not wish to be embroiled with me. Next morning, as I was making ready for my own departure, a crowd of Abyssinians came up to my camp, headed by Gerazmach Waldi¹, heretofore a great friend of mine, and demanded in the name of Menelik that I should move on. (I must explain parenthetically that, according to Abyssinian law, one person can stop another from doing anything with the formula 'Ba Menelik' ('in the name of Menelik'). Whoever makes use of this mystical invocation may be called upon to justify himself later before a judge, and there are penalties for using it frivolously; but much more severe penalties are inflicted for disregarding it.) I declined to budge unless they could produce the seal of Hapta Georgis or Woyessa, and shewed my passports, one permitting me to go from Addis Ababa to Boran and another permitting me to move from place to place in Boran. 'Oh, no. Those will not do. They mean that you can only stay two nights in any one place.' 'That is ridiculous' I replied. 'The fact that no time or period is mentioned in the pass naturally means that I am allowed to use my own discretion in the matter.' But it is no more use arguing with an Abyssinian at his worst than with his mule. The deputation would not listen to a word I said, and charged me with coming down to interfere and spy and plot to rob them of their country. Waldi excelled the others in vituperation: if he had his way, there would not be a white man on that side of Saku². He also accused me of keeping hens, which,

¹ No relation of Fitaauri Waldi or of Kanyazmach Waldi Gabriel.

² The Abyssinian name for Marsabit, the well-known resort for elephants in Kenya Colony about five days from the border.

he said, was a sign I was going to stop there for ever. In future I should not be allowed to cut grass for my mules or cut firewood without written permission. I asked whether he also forbade my hens to lay eggs. I was simply amazed at this man's complete *volte-face*. Hitherto he had always been very friendly, but now he was one of the worst of them to deal with. It might be of interest to specify the kindnesses I had shewn him. When I first passed through Mega, he was suffering from rheumatism and begged me to send him some medicine when I got to Addis Ababa. This I promised to do, and accordingly, when I reached the capital, I sent him several bottles by a special runner. Again, he told me he was a rich man and had everything he wanted with one exception, and for that one thing his soul craved with a great longing. In short, he longed to be the owner of a shot-gun and 500 cartridges. This I promised to get him, and with considerable trouble I obtained one and brought it down with me on my return to Mega. His gratitude knew no bounds, and in future he said he would love me as his son. I admit I was young and inexperienced in those days and attached more weight to his protestations than I should have done.

When they had all had their say, I suggested that, as Gardula was not far away and I had already written to Gerazmach Woyessa about my stopping at Mega and was expecting an answer daily, the wisest thing was to wait till we heard from him. Their only reply was to reiterate their demand that I should move on. 'I shall stay where I am' I said. 'I have your master's seal, you have not. You are demanding something for which you can shew no authority. Therefore I remain here. If your argument that the pass only allows me to stop two nights in a place were true, how was it that last year you kept me at Moyale for weeks on end when I wanted to go

on elsewhere?' Plausible as the Abyssinians are, they were unable to wriggle out of this conundrum. Nevertheless, they stuck to their main point, and at last I was forced to make a new proposal. I would not move my camp, but I offered to ride to Gardula and see Woyessa, who had received orders about my treatment direct from Fitaurari Hapta Georgis, on condition that they promised not to interfere with the camp during my absence. To this they consented.

Although my animals had not yet recovered from the effects of their recent long journey, I now had to set out on a flying visit to Gardula. I took with me three of my men, a spare mule for each of us, and no kit to speak of. Riding hard all the way, we reached Gardula in five days. Gerazmach Waldi overtook me soon after I left Mega, and told me that he had been forced into the deputation against his will. Fitaurari Waldi's soldiers, he said, were incensed by the fact that all the chief men at Mega were now my friends and had given me a camping place, all of which was true, for I had cultivated assiduously all the important people there and should probably have had no more trouble but for the antagonism of Fitaurari Waldi and his men. Gerazmach Waldi apologised for his conduct with the very lame excuse that he was afraid his land would be seized if he had not joined in the deputation. The most valuable lesson I learned from this incident was that an Abyssinian, with perhaps a few exceptions, can never be trusted to stand by you if he imagines his own interests are at stake, however friendly he may have shewn himself before.

When I told Woyessa what had happened, he expressed annoyance at the misbehaviour of the subordinate officers at Mega, and at once offered me the use of his own houses there until buildings could be erected for me, which he did not feel able to do until he received further instructions from Fitaurari Hapta

Georgis. From my point of view his offer was satisfactory, for it gave me a fixed base; and we had carried our point and gained a permanent footing for the Consulate at Mega. I accepted the proposal with alacrity, and set out on the return journey with a light heart, having with me Woyessa's authority to occupy his compound and to have a stable and an additional hut erected there.

The houses Woyessa had offered me were situated on the top of one of the ridges of Mega Mountain. There was water close by, and the views were wonderful. They were built, as are nearly all Abyssinian houses, in a compound surrounded by a strong zareba. The main house was oblong in shape. Besides this, there were several smaller buildings for servants, stores, and animals. They stood by themselves on the ridge, not surrounded by other people's houses; but Woyessa's servants were living just outside and his plough lands went right up the fence, and this caused me to doubt whether I should enjoy sufficient privacy. However, it was no use dwelling on the drawbacks; I had to take that or nothing. Upon closer inspection, I found that the roofs were in very bad repair and leaked abominably. Moreover, the whole compound was in the most disgustingly filthy condition imaginable—men, women, children, fowls, goats, mules, and cats all mixed up together. Sanitary arrangements as understood by us were entirely lacking, so we had our work cut out to get the place clean. I put all my men on to this, and turned my hand to all sorts of odd jobs from carpentering to disinfecting. Luckily Woyessa's man was a decent old fellow, who allowed me to do much as I liked with the buildings and fences, instead of forbidding me to cut a twig or put up a kraal, as I had half feared he might do.

After a fortnight's hard work, the place appeared to the outward eye thoroughly clean, and on 22nd

November, 1916, I took up my abode. There was a wooden bedstead with leather thongs stretched across it, which looked comfortable and clean and invited sleep. I tried it the first night—or rather the early part of the first night. I went to bed as usual, but I had hardly fallen asleep when I was wakened by a veritable plague of fleas and bugs—in platoons and companies all over my sheets. They were so bad that I had to turn out and get into a tent. Just as a man who has never been hungry or thirsty cannot realise what it means to be without the necessities of life, so till then I had never appreciated how much one has to be thankful for when one lives in a house that is free of vermin. The bugs were as difficult to dislodge as a hook which a fish has swallowed, and for days they were a source of physical and mental torture to me. The next day we smeared all the floor and walls of the house with cowdung and water, which had the effect of killing all the fleas. This is a useful remedy, but I did not care to apply it to the bedstead itself. As an alternative, we washed every part of the woodwork with boiling water, pouring it into every nook and cranny. We also removed the old thongs and replaced them with new ones. All this had not the slightest effect; the bugs still remained. We then tried paraffin, which was also ineffectual. As a last resort, I bound up all the woodwork, tied heavy stones to it, and then put the whole thing into a neighbouring stream. It sank to the bottom, and there I left it for several days. This was efficacious, but it did not improve the bedstead.

My star now seemed to be in the ascendant, and another of the ringleaders in the deputation deemed it wise to follow Gerazmach Waldi's example and make his peace with me. This was a judge named Haili. He always talked very big, but like many others of the same kidney, carried little weight. He

called on me one day and expressed his sorrow for the part he had played in the affair. I was graciously pleased to forgive him, and to celebrate the occasion he consumed about half a bottle of my best Fortnum and Mason whisky, and left saying that I was one of the most charming officers he had ever met—which I state here, not out of conceit, but as a testimonial to the excellence of the whisky, and a set-off to the prohibitionists who assert that alcohol never does good.

The new quarters were more satisfactory than I had anticipated. They could easily be made very comfortable, so that I should no longer envy the lot of the officers down at Moyale; and Woyessa's servants outside the compound did not worry me at all. I began to think that it might be best to let well alone and stay where I was rather than trouble Hapta Georgis to let me put up new buildings on the site I had originally chosen. There would probably have been no difficulty in arranging this, for when I visited Woyessa at Gardula he suggested that if I liked his place I could remain there and he would make himself another compound elsewhere.

During the next few weeks I worked day and night to get things ship-shape, unpacked all my kit and stowed it away, laid in stores, and in general did all that was necessary to make the place worthy of the dignity of a British Consulate. Then came a bolt from the blue. I was out walking on the afternoon of 20th December, when I met a Boran with a letter for me. The letter was from Gerazmach Woyessa to inform me that he had received a telephonic message from Fitaurari Walidi to require me to move from Mega at once and go to Moyale, where I was to camp in the unsuitable spot that Bokala had tried to force on me in 1915. To make matters worse, this same Bokala, despite the orders of Hapta Georgis that he should never be allowed to hold any position on

the border again, was on his way to Mega with a body of five hundred soldiers—probably for the express purpose of turning me out.

I was between the devil and the deep sea. To move everything now was practically out of the question. Even if I had been willing, it would have taken me a long time to pack up and get clear; and Bokala was only a few days off. Besides, if I did go to Moyale, it was practically certain that the same sort of thing would happen there. My predicament, I was convinced, was engineered by the Waldi faction, who hated the British fanatically and had been jibbering with rage ever since I obtained a footing at Mega. Their one object was to shift me to the other side of the frontier, and, by moving meekly to Moyale on the authority of a telephonic message which, as I guessed correctly, was a forgery, I should only have been encouraging them to carry their intrigues a stage further. On the other hand, by staying at Mega, I should be bound to have a bad time with Bokala and his soldiery.

I had to make up my mind what to do without delay. I decided to give out next morning that I was going to pay a visit to one of the Boran chiefs at Karayo, and to set out from Mega the same evening, leaving most of my belongings behind in charge of my men. From Karayo I could cut across into Sidamo and then make my way up to Addis Ababa, giving out that I had been called up to discuss the political situation with the British Minister. Once in Addis Ababa, I could tax Fitaurari Waldi with his conduct and try to get the question of my position in the south settled once and for all. In this way, any 'incidents' with the insufferable Bokala would be avoided, and, as I should not disclose my plans to anyone, the people at Mega would be expecting me to return from day to day. I had to risk the possibility of their interfering with my quarters when my

absence was prolonged ; on the whole I did not think they would dare to do that, in which case I should succeed in the all-important object of maintaining my base at Mega while the future was being settled in Addis Ababa.

This was the plan which I carried out with one variation. Owing to the rumours of civil war in the north and the possibility of my finding it difficult to get through to Addis Ababa, I decided to make a quick journey to Moyale to inform the officers of the Northern Frontier District (East Africa Protectorate) of what had happened and what I was going to do. I rode the seventy miles to Moyale on 21st December, and stayed there till Christmas, setting out the day after for Addis Ababa.

The officers at Moyale very kindly lent me a few camels, and with these I made straight across the Boran country for Karayo, leaving Mega Mountain on my left. Owing to the recent revolution in the north, the country was in a disturbed and unsettled state, and, as I had not proper passes, I was doubtful whether we should be able to get through the customs gates. I was also extremely uneasy in my mind about Bokala, for I knew quite well that, if he ever suspected I was making for Addis Ababa, he would give the necessary instructions for me to be held up on some pretext or other. When, therefore, I was near Karayo, I camped in the bush and waited till darkness to skirt the village. Having tied up our camel bells, we moved on like ghosts, passing quite close to some of the huts in which we could see the inmates sitting by their small fires. Now, a few miles on the other side of Karayo, there was at that time an important gate. If we got through this gate, I knew we should be safe as far as Bokala was concerned, for we should soon be in Sidamo, a province under a different Governor in which Fitaurari Waldi's writ did not run. It was now quite dark, so we

decided, when within a few hundred yards of the gate, to make a detour to our left with the idea of trekking through the bush and hitting the main track again some distance above the gate.

Of course, as always happens on such an occasion, one of our camels, with the peculiarly irritating way those animals have when tired, took it into its head to lie down, and when we urged it up it started to shriek and scream, making enough noise to waken the seven sleepers. At last we got the brute to move again. Luckily, none of the guards at the customs gate came to investigate, and we went on our way without interference.

It was very dark, the bush was very thick, and we all got hopelessly lost. The whole caravan, men, animals, and loads, were torn by the thorns. It was madly exasperating not to know whether we were going right, when time was so precious and we were so near our goal. I kept perfectly calm, for some time, till my helmet was knocked off by a bush. This sounds a petty incident, but under such conditions it was the last straw. The sluice-gates of my language were loosed. I swore and swore, and went on swearing till, about two o'clock in the morning, our camels became too tired to move and we were forced to camp.

The next morning, before dawn, we loaded up again and started. When it was light enough to see, we found we had been travelling in a semicircle, and there was the customs gate only a few hundred yards away from us. Happily it was so early that the inmates were still asleep. We wasted no time, and made our camels travel as they had never travelled before, and as, I hope, they will never travel again. We reached Finchoa without further incident and entered the province of Sidamo.

Finchoa reminds me of a strange thing that happened to me when I was there once before. I had

gone out for a stroll one evening from my camp, and as my servant was out I had, quite contrary to my usual practice, left my rifle behind. There is thick bush at Finchoa. I walked idly along for perhaps a quarter of an hour and was passing through a glade when I looked up and saw a leopard stretched on the ground a few yards away watching me. I did not like to run or turn back at once, lest that should be a temptation to the brute to chase me. So I walked on a few paces and then turned round as unconcernedly as I could, the leopard watching me with a cold and calculating eye all the time but luckily making no attempt to follow. As a rule, these beasts bound away into the bushes immediately they see a human being. Only once since then have I seen a leopard in the open. This was when riding from Mega to Moyale. The brute was crossing a large open plain and seemed to be sleepy, for he took no notice of us till we were quite close to him. I had several shots at him, but I am ashamed to say that I missed him.

From Finchoa the road runs through forests to the village of Kuku. There is one especially beautiful glade which lies like an arena in the midst of the forest. Here buffalo come to graze at night, but during the daytime they find a safe retreat in the dense thickets close by.

At Kuku we changed our camels for mules, and trekking on we turned to the west at a ford called Dima before reaching Gatelo. Leaving this place on 5th January, 1917, we ascended into another forest belt by Wachu Lalcha. From here onwards till we reached Gongoa on 7th January, the road passes through the most lovely forests interspersed with grassy hollows which are filled with water during the rainy season (*vleis* they are called in South Africa). Overhead, troops of Colobus monkeys, with their beautiful black and white bodies and long tails, sport in the tops of the highest trees. Surely there

are few more beautiful sights than these denizens of the wild in their natural haunts. This part of the journey is a sheer delight, and he would be a peculiarly soulless and prosaic person who did not appreciate it. Many a happy hour have I spent in these glades with my golf clubs and half a dozen balls when the day's journey was over, and I strongly advise any golfer who may follow in my footsteps never to leave his clubs behind. One can have great fun playing an imaginary opponent or trying to get one's shots within a certain area.

From Gongoa onwards the road is not nearly so interesting. On 10th January we reached the customs gate at Dombara. This is a large gate on the boundary of the Sidamo province. As we had been travelling very fast, the mules now shewed signs of exhaustion, so I decided to ride on ahead with two men. We had, if I remember right, three horses and a pack-mule, which entailed travelling very light. The main caravan I told to rest where it was for a few days, and then to make its way up to Addis Ababa slowly. The Abyssinians at the Dombara gate were very kind to us. They warned us not to go on alone through Kasse, the district just in front of us, as it was infested with brigands. Kasse is a waterless tract of country, intersected by numerous gullies which are admirably suited for ambushes. It has a very bad name, and I have known the brigands to attack and rob quite large and well-armed parties.

When the brigands are particularly active, traders will not start alone but will band together till they are so many that their caravan sometimes stretches for five or six miles. One of these caravans camping at night is a pretty sight. Studded about are the different parties—here a rich *nagādei* (trader) with perhaps fifty pack-mules and a large number of retainers, and close by a soldier with a couple of mules and one servant. All over the place are scattered

tents, large and small, and innumerable camp fires. When night falls, sentries take up their positions, singing to themselves of love and plunder, and at intervals during the hours of darkness, to shew that they are on the alert, they may be heard shrieking out in their loud, shrill voices such phrases as 'I see you, villain', 'Look out, I'll put a bullet into you'. When daylight dawns, camps are struck with incredible rapidity and the procession starts on its way once more.

On 11th January, we left Dombara in the afternoon, as I wished to pass through Kasse in the dark. Soon after we set out, heavy rain started and made things most unpleasant. When night came on, we had considerable difficulty in getting along owing to the numerous gullies down which we blundered and floundered. Our horses, however, were very sure-footed and we did not have any tumbles. Whether we were all frightened before we started I don't know, but I do know that I for one was very glad when we had left that bad stretch of country behind.

About an hour before dawn an amusing thing occurred. As I have said before, we had three horses and a mule. We had chosen this mule because it had formed a great affection for one of the horses. We concluded from this that it would follow the horses and would not require to be driven. This proved to be the case at the start, and it trotted along with its load as a good little mule should. However, some distance beyond Alaba, as we were passing a soldiers' or traders' camp (we could not tell which in the dark), this wretched mule took it into its head that it was bored with the whole proceedings, that it was tired, that it had not been outspanned at the usual hour, and that it did not like its friend, the horse, as much as it had done before. Therefore, without any warning, it turned off sharply to the right, and made straight for the camp at a quick trot. It

actually entered the camp, but luckily all the sentries were fast asleep, and, although our hearts were in our mouths, we managed to extricate the erring animal. Had we roused the camp, we should have experienced some difficulty in explaining satisfactorily what three mounted men were doing in a strange camp at that hour of the night. In fact, the chances are that we should have been fired at as *shiftas* (i.e. brigands) ourselves.

On 13th January we passed through Urbarak, where is the junction with the road from Gardula. Urbarak consists of a large open plain with a few big trees scattered about over it. A little farther on we met Dajzmach Balcha's people returning to Sidamo. There were thousands upon thousands of them, and for miles the road was so blocked that progress was difficult. It was a picturesque sight, with the slaves carrying the *taj* pots covered with red cloth, bread baskets, bamboo tent-poles, and other impedimenta, the ladies of rank with their faces covered and riding beautifully caparisoned mules, and the soldiers with their pack-mules and slaves. Everything and everyone were all mixed up together—all kinds of rifles, spears, and swords, all kinds of people. It seemed a hopelessly confused mass, but in reality there was more order than could be discerned. When the chosen camping ground was reached, tents were pitched very quickly and each officer took up his proper place without any muddling. The Dajzmach's tent is always placed in the centre, and the others camp in circles around it. I was not personally acquainted with Dajzmach Balcha at this time. That was a pleasure which I experienced later. He is one of the best generals in the Abyssinian army, and gunnery is his speciality. On this occasion, after meeting all his retainers, we passed his tent, in which he was still sleeping. When a big Abyssinian chief goes travelling, it is his custom to send on a duplicate tent

to the next camping ground. When this is pitched, he leaves the old camp, mounts his mule, which ambles beautifully, and, surrounded by a crowd of two or three hundred soldiers on foot, makes his progress to the new site. By this plan he does not have the discomfort of waiting, but goes straight into his tent where everything is prepared for his arrival.

Just as the horse with us takes precedence among the domesticated animals, so does the mule with the Abyssinians. An ambling gait is what they appreciate more than any other quality, and very high prices are paid for good ambling mules. It must be admitted that they are wonderful animals and will live and thrive where a horse would die. After all my wanderings I still have one of my original mules left. This mule, Bulla by name, is a short, thick-set animal. His colour is reddish, and he has a fine eye. His record is almost unbelievable. He has been everywhere from the terribly cold tablelands to the hot and waterless plains. He has never had a day's illness, nor a sore back, and he has never lain down with his load.

On 14th January we reached the Awash River, and next day Addis Ababa. The journey up had been very cold, we had not been able to carry many blankets, and on the last part we had not had much to eat. Hence, on this occasion, the fleshpots of the Legation were more than usually welcome.

CHAPTER VIII

REVOLUTION

Lij Yasu and his policy—repercussions of the Great War—conspiracy, rebellion, civil war, revolution—defeat of Negus Michael—flight of Lij Yasu—Ras Tafari triumphant—coronation of Empress Zauditu.

I MUST now retrace my steps a little in order to describe the events which led up to the deposition of Lij Yasu in the autumn of 1916. As I have shewn in Chapter I, the Ethiopian Empire which Menelik handed over to Lij Yasu in 1910 was a most heterogeneous aggregation of races and religions. It had been built up by the warlike prowess of Christian Abyssinians, and governed under Menelik by a system amounting in effect to a military autocracy. Now it is obvious that the limits within which an autocrat may exercise power are governed by two factors—first, his own personality and competence, and secondly, the nature and strength of the various beliefs and desires entertained by him and his people. When an autocrat's predominant beliefs and desires coincide fairly closely with those of his people, his path is smooth, and the historian ingenuously labels him the incarnation of the spirit of the times. But in the case when the beliefs and desires of ruler and ruled conflict instead of coinciding, we find that the historian shrouds the ensuing clash of human personalities in a mist of vague generalisations and high principles—Cross or Crescent, autocracy or democracy, 'no taxation without representation', and so on *ad infinitum*—

with the result that the average person cannot see the trees for the wood.

The first man a successful autocrat must learn to overcome is himself. This Lij Yasu could never do. He was unstable and self-indulgent, ambitious yet lacking both the energy to achieve his ambitions and the personal magnetism or charm which would induce others to sacrifice themselves for him. He preferred women and wine to work, and in consequence he never attempted to undertake the daily labour of deciding all the minute details which, under the existing system of Government, must be done by him alone. The transaction of business under these conditions became practically impossible. An important chief would be summoned to the capital and would arrive to find that the Prince Regent had left for the opposite end of Abyssinia. No one could say how long he would be absent, and a chief might kick his heels for months in Addis Ababa and then leave with his purpose unfulfilled. Alternatively he might wear out both himself and his mules by following the elusive Lij Yasu from place to place in the faint hope of catching him and obtaining a hearing. Another chief, perhaps, would have the luck to find the Prince in the capital, but when he appeared at the *Gibi* or palace he would be told that the Prince had gone shooting or riding. The chief would wait hour after hour, till dusk, till midnight, but almost always in vain. Abyssinian chiefs are proud and hypersensitive, and such treatment naturally made them ill-disposed towards the man they had accepted as ruler.

In a very short time much graver causes for discontent were offered them. Lij Yasu began to give indications of a policy which ran directly counter to all the traditions, history, and beliefs of the Abyssinian people. He coquetted with Islam, married the daughters of several important Danakil chiefs, sought the hand of the daughter of the Moslem ruler of

the autonomous province of Jimma, appointed his father, Ras Michael of the Wallo Galla, to the rank of *Negus*, and intrigued with the 'Mad' Mullah in Somaliland. These startling developments took place during the latter half of 1915. Whether Lij Yasu's sudden sympathy with Islam was entirely spontaneous is more than doubtful. It may be granted that both polygamy and the Prophet's picture of the after-life would appeal to his voluptuous nature. On the other hand, defection from the strict rule of monogamy is even more frequent in Christian Abyssinia than in Christian Europe, so that it was not really necessary for him to change his religion in order to satisfy his desires. Was the change, then, dictated by considerations of high policy; was it part of a constructive scheme to rebuild his Empire on a new basis? Lij Yasu, it may be suggested, realised that, hitherto, Abyssinia had not fallen into the hands of European countries during the scramble for Africa simply because rival plans had luckily cancelled one another, that Islam was the one religion which was making great headway in Africa, and that therefore an Islamic Empire would offer the best chance of successful resistance to European Powers. Very probably such ideas were running in Lij Yasu's mind, but whether they originated there is questionable. There had been no indications of political ability and initiative in his earlier career, and indeed the foresight and energy which such schemes presupposed were entirely out of keeping with all that was known of his character. Thus, one is compelled to seek another source for his inspiration, and one need not seek very far.

The alliance between Turkey and Germany necessarily gave a Moslem emphasis to the diplomacy of the Central Powers everywhere outside Europe and America. In Abyssinia Germany and Turkey enjoyed a distinct advantage over the Entente Powers. They

could offer huge bribes in the shape of promises of adjoining territory then in the hands of Italy, France, or Britain. Moreover, they could play upon the Abyssinians' fear—quite groundless as a matter of fact—that, if the Entente won the war and dominated the world, their own country would soon be partitioned among the victors: what Italy had failed to do by the Treaty of Ucciali, or France in the complicated affair of the railway from Jibuti to Addis Ababa, would be easily accomplished with Italy, France, and Britain in alliance. From Turkey and Germany, on the other hand, Abyssinia had much less to fear—as well as much more to expect. Turkey's political interests in this part of Africa were practically non-existent, while Germany had had little opportunity of scheming in the past and could therefore pose as a would-be benefactor, the saviour of Abyssinia from the rapacious clutches of the Entente Powers. This attitude, however, had to be fitted in with the general plan of inflaming fanaticism and fomenting rebellion among the Moslem populations of the British, French, and Italian dependencies in Asia and Africa. Thus it came about that Germany was committed to the extension of pan-Islamism in Abyssinia. The fact that Lij Yasu's Moslem inclinations did not become apparent till the latter part of 1915 suggests in itself a close relationship between his change of policy and the great events then being played on the world stage. It is therefore not merely official or British bias on my part, nor the reflection of rumour and gossip among the Entente Legations, to ascribe Lij Yasu's new attitude to the machinations of Turkish and German agents rather than his own unaided imagination.

Among the Moslems of Abyssinia and Somaliland the most absurd accounts of European affairs gained currency. It was generally believed, for example, that the German Emperor had embraced Islam and

imposed it also upon Belgium, Poland, and Serbia. In the Moslem province of Harar, proclamations preaching a *Jehad* (holy war) and interspersed with insults to the British were exhibited, and the Abyssinian authorities would not have them removed in spite of all protests. During 1915 and the early months of 1916, Lij Yasu spent much time in Harar and the Danakil country farther north, intriguing with the Moslem chiefs of those regions and of Somaliland. In his absence it was impossible to transact any official business whatever at Addis Ababa. When he returned, the British and Italian Ministers protested strongly against the encouragement given to Turko-German propaganda, and for a short time Lij Yasu mended his ways. Before the end of July, however, when he went back to Harar, he had resumed his former habits, attending Muhammedan services, frequenting the houses of Moslems, and circulating photographs of himself in a fez surrounded by pictures of his supposed Moslem ancestors.

Abyssinians pride themselves on their Christianity above everything else, and Lij Yasu's desertion of the national faith roused intense resentment. The opposition, however, was ineffective owing to the mutual suspicions of the principal chiefs. Yasu cunningly turned this to his advantage in the summer of 1916 by encouraging his Ministers to bring accusations against one another and then allowing them to retain office on payment of a heavy fine. A number who had suffered in this way, together with other malcontents, sank their differences and planned to meet on 30th August, obtain release from their oath to the Prince Regent from the *Abuna*, and then summon Lij Yasu from Harar under threat that an army would be sent to bring him by force if he refused. The plot was betrayed to the Prime Minister with full details, and collapsed; but Lij Yasu reaped little benefit, for he had no one in the capital suffi-

ciently enamoured of his doings to press home the advantage.

The Shoan chiefs implicated in the abortive conspiracy laid fresh plans. This time it was proposed to begin the movement by arresting Lij Yasu in Harar and simultaneously proclaiming his deposition in Addis Ababa. On 27th September, 1916, a general meeting of Shoan chiefs was held in the capital, at which Lij Yasu was deposed and Zauditu, daughter of the Emperor Menelik, declared Empress with Ras Tafari as heir to the throne. Proclamations announcing this and ordering a mobilisation were at once despatched to all parts of the country. Three days later, news reached Addis Ababa that the plot had miscarried at Harar, and that Lij Yasu was in possession of the town. In the capital there was great excitement during the first few days of the revolution, and several people were killed by the promiscuous firing of rifles. The new Government soon suppressed disorder, and in less than a week the town had resumed its normal aspect and the markets were again in full swing—'Business as usual'. By 11th October the towns of Harar and Dire Dawa were reported to be in the hands of the Government, and Lij Yasu was escaping to the north with a small force. In Harar itself the situation had been extremely critical. Upon the outbreak of the rising the Moslems actually proposed a massacre of the Europeans, but Lij Yasu did not give a definite answer. On the night of his flight a small spark would have been enough to start a conflagration. The following morning Dajazmach Balcha occupied the town for the Government, and it was the Moslems who were slaughtered instead.

The members of the new Government were so overjoyed at their success in Harar, which did away with the possibility of their having to fight on two fronts, that they failed to realise what a mistake they

had made in allowing Lij Yasu to escape. Had he been captured, opposition to the new régime would have collapsed, and even Yasu's father, Negus Michael of Wallo, would have hesitated to move, with his son a hostage in the hands of his enemies. As it was, a struggle with Wallo was now a certainty, and not a few of the Shoan chiefs were looking forward to the opportunity of paying off old scores.

The reports which reached Addis Ababa shewed that the revolution was warmly welcomed throughout the south and west, and Ras Tafari expressed himself perfectly confident of the ultimate issue. The Government's troops, however, came in very slowly. There is little method or organisation about the mobilisation of an Abyssinian army. A chief receives orders to report at a specified place with a certain number of men; he assembles as many as he can and moves off, leaving the soldiers from outlying posts to join him when they can. By 15th October it became clear that the Government had under-estimated the seriousness of the situation. Negus Michael, who enjoyed all the advantages of concentration, was reported to be debouching from the gorges of Wallo with a strong army. It seemed doubtful whether the Shoan troops would be reinforced in time to stop his advance on Addis Ababa, and the four Entente Ministers therefore laid plans in readiness for the occupation of the capital by Negus Michael. The foreign inhabitants in the town were extremely nervous. Their anxiety was justifiable, for the prisons had been thrown open at the beginning of the revolution and the prisoners told to enrol in the army, but many 'bad hats' had remained behind in the town. Evacuation was ruled out as the railway line was cut, and it was decided to collect all foreigners in the Legations on the approach of the Wallo army.

On 17th October, the most advanced body of the Shoan army under Ras Lul Saggad was attacked at

Ankober by Negus Michael. The telephone operators took to their heels, and Addis Ababa only learnt two days later that Ras Lul Saggad had been killed, his army cut to pieces, and Ankober taken by the enemy. Between the Wallo army and Addis Ababa there was now a force of fewer than 10,000 men led by Fitaurari Hapta Georgis. This commander had been telephoning to the Government for days begging for reinforcements, but the authorities in the capital paid no heed and even delayed the departure of troops which were ready to march in order to stamp the rifles with the Government mark. The news of the Ankober disaster spurred them to action, and every available soldier was now hurried out to Fitaurari Hapta Georgis, who had taken up a position at Bulga.

‘The Fitaurari kept the Negus back by negotiating with him. Finally the Negus sent an ultimatum and asked for a reply by the next morning. He said that Lij Yasu must be restored to the throne, and that Tafari could keep his title of Ras and the province of Kafa. The Fitaurari replied that he could not answer such an ultimatum himself, that the Negus must in all decency give him time to communicate with Addis Ababa, and that he would send a man at once on horseback as the telephone was not working. The telephone was working beautifully as a matter of fact, and the delay just gave the Shoan army time to come up. Even so, the battle was touch and go, and it was Ras Kasa’s intervention on the Shoan left which finally decided it. We received the news at Addis Ababa in the evening by the firing of guns all over the town, and our relief was great. Had the Negus won, we had made arrangements to collect all the British subjects in the Legation, and had got food and supplies in for a siege. We hoped the Negus would see that the Legations were not touched, but a victorious mob was not likely to listen much to

reason, and had Lij Yasu been there, he might have proved vindictive. Lij Yasu, indeed, did come up to Ankober to hear the result of the fight and then cleared off again.

‘The old Negus fought extremely well in the forefront all the time but his cowardly son funked the whole affair. If the Moslems had won out, Bertolani of the Italian Legation was to have sallied forth on his trusty mule to meet the incoming horde and try to persuade the Negus that it would be far better for him in the long run not to attack any of the Legations. God bless him, I am sure that he would have gone with a stout heart and a broad smile, but I hate to think what might have happened to him if the Negus had been in the background, for the victorious fanatics might easily have given him his quietus before he reached the C.O. Anyhow, all’s well that ends well, and we were much relieved not to have our compound full of Greeks, Armenians, Indians, and the rest, all in a state of suppressed excitement. Naturally, the Russians should look after the Greeks and Armenians, but they are in a more exposed position in a way than we are, and so we had asked them all to be our week-end guests if necessary. What a cosmopolitan house party!

‘The children are still unable to go out of the Legation grounds, as Dajaz Balcha, who has come up from Harar to take charge of the town while Ras Tafari is away fighting, has strung up some of the criminals and lunatics who have been letting off their guns by accident or on purpose and taking unto themselves things that do not belong to them. One of these beauties is dangling from a perfectly good gallows just at the cross-roads over the bridge, and, while some of our friends are busy photographing him, others (ourselves included) feel that our children do not require any warning as to the possible fate of malefactors. Balcha is quite right, but the sight

of bodies strung up at intervals, on the way to, and in, the market-place somewhat offends those who are cursed with an artistic temperament. Our only satisfaction is that if he does not order them down within the next day or two, they will fall of their own weight, as Horace would have expressed it.¹

The battle was fought late in October, and on 2nd November Ras Tafari, with Fitaurari Hapta Georgis and the principal officers and twenty thousand of the victorious troops, entered Addis Ababa in triumph. A great review was held on the race-course. 'Zauditu arrived from the town end, and the Entente Ministers and their staffs went and shook hands. She keeps all her face veiled except the eyes. Then the army, which had camped the night before in the Shola plains below us, began to come in from our entrance and it took three hours for them to march past. All the Ministers and chiefs were in full toggery, and the biggest had pipers and drummers in front of them. Every group sent up spokesmen to the Empress's tent to burst their jugular veins telling their deeds of derring-do. It was wonderful to see how the horses and mules dashed up, stopped, and wheeled round; yet not a single man was hurt or came off (one or two nearly did). They mostly had the *shammas* of the men they had killed round their horses' necks, and one man had a sword with a clean hole made by a bullet. The captured guns and machine-guns were brought along on mules. The ex-K.A.R. men and the Tripolitani (the Abyssinians who fought in Tripoli in the Italian army) marched past—what was left of them. They did extremely well, especially the K.A.R., and Tafari is delighted with them. Fitaurari Hapta Georgis came riding past like a two-year-old, with a green

¹ From a private letter written by Mr. Gerald Campbell, now His Majesty's Consul-General at San Francisco, who was at the British Legation throughout the revolution.

sash round his head and a big ostrich feather stuck in it. As each big chief passed, he dismounted and came into Zauditu's tent. Dajazmach Nado had on a white helmet. Tafari arrived in great style and looked very happy. Then came Negus Michael, walking on foot. He had been allowed to ride up to the ground, and had been kept in the club-house until his time came. He had been left unchained till his arrival at Shola, but he was now brought along in fetters. He looked very dignified as he came up to the tent and bowed slightly, evidently wondering whether he was to be asked in; but an order was given, and off he had to go. It was horrid and made us all feel a bit sick. The Abuna Petros, who had been captured too, had been brought into the tent and embraced by his triumphant brother-in-God, but the Negus who had fought so well for his worthless son was sent away. After him came the Wallo generals in chains and carrying stones on their shoulders in token of servitude. Ras Kasa's procession finished the review.¹ The remnant of Ras Lul Saggad's army, barely 150 men out of 5,000, headed by their dead commander's son, marched past in silence, all clad just as they had fought with no trappings of victory.

The return of the army to Addis Ababa, while Wallo was left unoccupied, Lij Yasu still at large, and the general situation unstable, is characteristic of the Abyssinian mind. Custom dictates that an army should mourn for the fallen and renew its supplies before setting out again, even though such inaction gives the enemy the chance of reorganising his forces for further resistance. Every effort to goad the new Government into activity was met by the fatalistic argument, 'Shoa is in the hands of God'. A policy of drift was still the order of the day when I reached Addis Ababa on 15th January, 1917. Half the Shoaan army was still encamped there,

¹ From a private letter written by Mr. Gerald Campbell.



FITAUARI HAPTA GEORGIS.

the big chiefs were squabbling and intriguing, and the smaller ones who had made nothing out of the war were discontented to the verge of mutiny. It was hardly safe to move about the town after dusk, and on one occasion a band of robbers attempted to enter the British Legation in the middle of the night. Ras Tafari seemed overwhelmed by the detailed business of government; and corruption and licence were not diminished. Almost the only decision which the Government took for eight or ten weeks after the defeat of Negus Michael was to have Zauditu crowned empress in February. It was hoped that this step would bring all the chiefs up to the capital for a general liquidation of the revolution, and by presenting the country with an accomplished fact would provide some security against further revolution.

The coronation ceremony took place on Sunday, 11th February, 1917. The following description was written by Mr. Leland Buxton who was an eye-witness.

‘The Legation party breakfasted at 6.30 a.m. and started at 7 a.m. for the coronation. It was about an hour’s ride to the church where Zauditu had been crowned empress at 2 a.m. In front of the church was a dais covered with rugs, with a throne at the back of it consisting of a small coloured tent over a divan. On and round the dais were congregated the aristocracy of Abyssinia, gorgeously arrayed, and the representatives of the British, Italian, French, and Russian Legations, with a few other Europeans. The Germans and Turks did not turn up, having been told that they would have to sit at a separate table at the banquet, for the new régime was the outcome of an anti-Moslem, and incidentally pro-Ally, revolution.

‘There were many hundreds of Abyssinians in magnificent costumes, tawdry and bizarre but ex-

tremely effective in the mass, and giving a much more exotic and barbaric touch than anything I have seen elsewhere in the East. One sees the same sort of thing in pageant plays, but I imagine that Abyssinian splendour resembles that of ancient Rome or Babylon rather than that of any Muhammedan State. Most of the gold and gems, except perhaps those of the big chiefs, were of no more value, I suppose, than those of the costumes at His Majesty's. It was the lions' manes and the round shields which gave the really barbaric effect.

'There were chairs for the Europeans on the left side of the throne. The Italian Minister, Count Colli, *doyen* of the diplomats, took the highest seat, and the order of precedence after him was the British Minister, the French Minister, the Russian Minister, the Commissioner for the Somaliland Protectorate (now Sir G. F. Archer, K.C.M.G.), and the French Governor of Jibuti. They and their wives occupied the front row, and the rest of us were behind, but we all had a good view of the space between the church and the dais across which Zauditu walked.

'We got there about 8 o'clock, and some time afterwards a lot of white-clad priests emerged from the church (a new Byzantine building) and moving to one side chanted and waved palm branches and did a feeble sort of dance, while various great chiefs and Ministers made their way to the right side of the throne. The most venerable figure was that of the *Abuna*, the Coptic archbishop. Everything was done in an exceedingly leisurely manner, and there were hours of waiting at every stage of the proceedings. Eventually the new Empress appeared, clad in a crimson velvet robe embroidered with gold, and with her face only partly covered. She is not by any means a beauty, but has a pleasant, if somewhat inanimate expression and rather Mongolian features. Beside her chair walked her relative, Ras Tafari, who had

been proclaimed heir-apparent and was the real ruler of the Empire. He is a smallish, good-looking man of light complexion and of Semitic type—essentially an Old Testament figure. Zauditu, who wore a tall and magnificent crown, walked to the throne, where she reclined on the divan and was more or less concealed by curtains of red, green, and yellow, the Abyssinian colours. A long proclamation was read out, which, by way of apologising for the sex of the monarch, referred to the great success achieved by Queen Victoria. We all went up and made our bows on the steps of the throne, which was guarded by gorgeous creatures with flashing swords. All this time two kinema men in the deplorable garments of the west were working hard on the dais, and all the European scallywags of the place were allowed to come up and take snapshots—the only blot on an otherwise superb spectacle. There was periodical cheering by women, which resembled the song of innumerable nightingales, but they must have been kept somewhere in the background, for their absence in the crowds was marked. There was also some drum beating, and an abominable band attempted to play the Marseillaise. The weather was perfect.

‘At about 10 o’clock Zauditu was carried to a gilded coach, a rather grotesque object copied from the coronation of George V. We moved off the dais and through the crowds of soldiery to the other side of the church, where our horses and escorts were waiting. At the head of the procession to the palace were several coaches, one of them containing the old but powerful Ras Waldi Georgis, whose attitude towards the new régime was giving rise to some anxiety. In the carriage with him was a nobleman in an enormous old-fashioned top hat, and another big swell wore a grey straw hat, but unconventionality of this kind was rare. At length the procession moved off along Addis Ababa’s one road to the royal palace

about two miles away. Each Legation had its escort ; ours were Indian Lancers, while the French had Somalis who had fought at Verdun. Three of us wore khaki, with borrowed swords, and the rest Civil Service uniforms, and we rode splendid Abyssinian ponies. The British Minister (Captain the Hon. W. G. Thesiger, D.S.O.) and Mr. Archer were the most imposing figures among the Europeans, but the handsome Count Colli also looked very smart in an Italian dragoon's uniform. The street was thickly lined with soldiers armed with rifles and spears. Excellent order was kept, and anyone who ventured into the road was mercilessly beaten and lucky if he escaped without a bleeding head. We were kinematographed. The Abyssinian colours were everywhere displayed, and some of the European houses were adorned with effigies of Zauditu. The white-clad crowds among the gum trees on the side of the hill were delightfully picturesque. There were contingents from all parts of the Empire, and Waldi Georgis had a band of mounted drummers in conspicuous blue and green costumes.

‘ After an hour or so we reached the palace, or *Gibi*, which consists of a number of inferior buildings in a large compound. We had a long wait in the reception room, and were again kinematographed, to the great delight of the French. At about noon we walked to the scene of the subsequent orgy and witnessed a sight which entirely baffles my descriptive powers. A vast space was covered over with coloured stuffs forming a marquee perhaps a hundred yards square, one side of which was a large building, the Court of Justice. In the middle of this side of the building, steps led up to a sort of alcove, where in the dim light sat Zauditu and a few attendants, visible only to those standing opposite the steps. Just below the alcove but well above everyone else, three richly arrayed and motionless figures held aloft

drawn swords. At the foot of the steps Ras Tafari and four or five of the greatest men in Abyssinia were sitting on piles of carpets, their robes, gems, and spangles of gold and silver gleaming in the lurid red light which fell upon them through the canopy above. To the left of Tafari, who sat with his back to the steps, was a long table with chairs for the Europeans. His party and ours were both on a large dais, the rest of which was thronged with high officers and dignitaries squatting on the floor. The ground fell away below us to the bottom of the marquee, and long low tables covered deep with native bread like pancakes stretched down the slope. Eventually 8,000 soldiers squatted between them and were all fed at the same time. (The feasting went on for seven days, until they had got through the whole army.) Several slaves holding huge masses of raw bullock in their hands stood round Ras Tafari and his party, Fitaurari Hapta Georgis, Minister for War, Ras Abata, Ras Kasa, and Ras Hailu, all of them overlords of vast territories. The other Abyssinians were similarly served with raw meat, which they cut off with their knives while the slaves groaned beneath the weight of their burdens. At these banquets the Abyssinians eat meat and bread and drink *taj* (made from honey) for hours, but do not become really intoxicated until the evening, although the feasting begins in the morning.

‘We ourselves did not fare much better, though we had twelve courses which were supposed to be European, but every one of which was nauseating in the extreme. Floods of wine were supplied to us and the Abyssinian aristocrats—Chablis, red wine, sweet champagne, raki, and *taj*. This last is to me unpleasant, but it may be an acquirable taste. Our meal lasted four and a half hours. Since then I have endured another *gibir* of equal length, and there are several more ahead. One can get up and stroll

about during the last hour or two, but they are none the less exhausting. However, one could not have had a more remarkable scene to watch, and the central group below the alcove, bathed in rose-coloured light, was a really superb display of colour. There were forty or fifty people at our table, mostly from the British, Italian, and French Legations, and only one Abyssinian, the Foreign Minister. Even a *gibir* ends at last, and about 4.30 we shook hands with Ras Tafari and rode home, having been out for over ten hours. On this occasion Zauditu was kept entirely in the background, but she received the Legations later in the week, and expressed to us a laudable desire that our country might have peace, and that she might be informed when that happy time arrived. She is very small, and squatting on a throne in a gold and crimson robe appeared to have no legs at all.

‘Coronating was in full swing for over a week, and we were much relieved when it was over. There was semi-official visiting among the various Legations, and a polo match between the British and the Italians. A big lunch at the hotel was given by the Legations to the official visitors, and a five-hour *gibir* was given by the Abyssinians to the so-called Europeans of the town—about three hundred scallywags, mainly Greeks, Armenians, and Syrians, but including several Germans and Austrians. Before this the Legation parties were presented with decorations and I received the fourth class of the Order of the Star of Ethiopia! Other events were *gibirs* given by the Foreign Minister to us and by the Legation to Tafari and the other Rases. For at least ten days all work was impossible.’

At one of these functions an incident occurred which is worthy of being chronicled. In connection with the coronation, the Abyssinian Government had presented the decoration called the Star of Ethiopia to the members of the different Legations.



GROUP AT BRITISH LEGATION.

The Ministers had received the Grand Cordon and the other members different grades according to their rank. A certain Power, which since has passed through troublous times and no longer has a Legation at Addis Ababa, was at this time represented by a Chargé d'Affaires, who had been given the second class of the order because he had not the rank of a Minister. We had all sat down to luncheon in the *Gibi*, when the official in question, who was opposite me, suddenly rose and in a long and furious speech demanded to know why he had not been decorated with the Grand Cordon. It was a deliberate insult to his Government, he said, and threatened to leave the table unless he received the Grand Cordon immediately. A high court official tried to appease the infuriated diplomatist, but he would not be comforted, and eventually, after much running about and many whispered discussions with still higher officials, a Grand Cordon was removed from the breast of an Abyssinian dignitary and presented to him. I do not think the Chargé d'Affaires would have been edified if he had heard the comments of his colleagues on his extraordinary behaviour—but then the Slavs have no sense of humour.

CHAPTER IX

THIRD JOURNEY SOUTH

Permission granted to build Consulate at Gardula—third journey south through Jimma, Shambare, and Zala—crossing the Omo River.

PUBLIC business was completely held up until everybody had recovered from the coronation festivities, but I had to stay on in Addis Ababa waiting for a definite decision about my house down in the south. Long before Christmas, when the British Minister asked Fitaurari Hapta Georgis for the letter authorising me to erect buildings at Mega, he replied 'Wait; we will think it over'. He evidently felt that he must discuss the question with the Council of Ministers, which, in the chaotic condition of State affairs then prevailing, meant that nothing had been settled by the time I reached the capital. After the coronation festivities, the British Minister reopened the matter, and Hapta Georgis again referred it to the Council. The question was discussed and postponed and discussed again. Opposition, however, was eventually overborne, and by the middle of March, 1917, I obtained the necessary written orders allowing me to establish my headquarters at Gardula, the capital of Gamo and the place where the Governor of Boran usually resided. It was a disappointment that I was unable to get permission to stay at Mega, but Gardula was a tolerably satisfactory compromise. In the meantime, we had to remember that Rome was not built in a day, and we still hoped to move to Mega eventually. The local officers at Gardula were ordered to build me a house on a site chosen by me and according to my

own plans, and I undertook to pay a fixed rent for it. In addition, I succeeded in obtaining a passport to travel freely about the country. It really seemed that I should get my house this time, and I began the preparations for my return to the south with a light heart.

In order to visit the one part of Southern Abyssinia with which I was still unacquainted, I decided this time to travel to Gardula through the province of Jimma, which is situated to the south-west of Addis Ababa. I set out on my journey on 24th March, 1917. The road to Jiran, the capital of Jimma, is one of the important highways of the south and is well known to many European travellers, but I think I am right in saying that the route between Jiran and Gardula has not been described before. For the first part of my journey, I shall content myself with quoting some passages from an interesting paper by Major L. F. I. Athill, who followed the same route two years later in 1919.

‘The mongrel civilisation of Addis Ababa soon fell behind, and a few hours’ march took us to the col from which we obtained our last view of the town. Before us lay the wide valley of the Awash, and beyond it the hilly mass of the Gurage country. The Awash valley or plain is rich in cultivation. The deep black soil bears good crops of maize, millet, linseed, *tef* grass, and a kind of pea called *shumburra*.¹ A certain amount of wheat is grown, while the barley, which is one of the most important crops of the country, hugs the hillsides or in some cases crowns the summits. This Awash plain becomes a bog in the rains, and is dotted with small Galla and Abyssinian homesteads built on knolls which become islands in wet weather. In the middle of the plain the Awash River has cut for itself a channel some 30 feet below the plain-level. Its course here is unmarked

¹ *shimbira* = chick-pea.

by trees and is not noticeable from more than a few hundred yards' distance. In dry weather it is a sullen, not very rapid, stream, about 60 feet wide and girth-high at the fords, but when in flood it is a formidable obstacle.

'The Awash plain is not pleasant to cross. Being entirely denuded of trees there is neither shade nor firewood. A strong wind, often bitterly cold, sweeps over its unprotected surface at night. For several days our route was parallel with the line of hills which under various names runs westwards through Addis Alam, and is the watershed between the basins of the Blue Nile and those of the Omo and the Awash. The watershed between the two latter is the rounded and quite unimposing col which joins the line of hills referred to above with the Gurage plateau. The surface of this rounded col is furrowed by streams running from north to south, and then turning either east or west according as their destination is the Awash or the Omo. Where our line of march cut these streams, it was impossible to tell in which direction they eventually turned, that is, in which catchment area we were at the moment. However, we soon reached a point where we were no longer left in doubt. This was a bluff overhanging the valley of the Bia Worabissa,¹ one of the many eastern affluents of the Omo. The rather broken country here was much more attractive than the alluvial plain we had left. The soil was of a lighter reddish colour, and the deforestation was less complete. Small clumps and isolated *wera* or wild olive trees were frequent, and here and there fine specimens of *werka* or wild fig trees afforded welcome shade. On our right the highlands continued in apparently unbroken line, and before us lay a somewhat corrugated valley of most attractive appearance. I should perhaps say a series of valleys, for the trend of the drainage was

¹ = 'country of hyenas', in Galla, (A. W. H.)



CANOES ON AWASH RIVER.



MY CARAVAN CROSSING WAKENE FORD, WABI RIVER.

still from north to south, at right angles to our route, down numerous parallel stream beds. To the south of our route they all turned eastwards, joining each other and flowing into the Omo in one stream which took the name of its largest feeder, the Walga. On the rounded spurs which separated these streams were many well-shaded and prosperous-looking homesteads belonging to the better-class inhabitants, and usually surrounded by plantations of male banana known to the Galla as *qocho* and to the Abyssinian as *musa inset*. The less pretentious huts belonging to the Galla serfs could everywhere be seen nestling among the crops. The cultivation to a large extent clung to the hillsides, which at their various altitudes produced all the cereals and legumes common to Abyssinia. The lower levels were dotted with herds of useful-looking cattle with many varieties of horn.

‘As we drew nearer to the Omo, the country became more hilly and the innumerable valleys more rugged and steeper of side, while the patches of forest grew more numerous and larger in extent.

‘The Walga is a stream of no geographical importance, but typical of the many brooks which make this country so productive. It narrows in places to 25 feet, and has a mean depth of 3 feet, with numerous shallows. Above our camp it passed through a beautiful wooded gorge, and a short distance below, among some rather fantastic contortions of the ground, tumbled over a ledge with a drop of 50 feet into a rocky basin of great depth. Its grassy banks were in places shaded by great fig trees. Wildfowl abounded, chiefly mallard and the common Egyptian goose. Irrigation channels tapped it at frequent intervals, though they did not seem to be put to very scientific use. The kloofs in the foot-hills through which it flowed afforded ideal sites for farmhouses.

‘The true native life of this delightful country was purely Galla, and socially resembled that of an English

countryside. The yeoman farmer, like his British counterpart, was usually a cheerful and portly individual with a chronic grouse against the weather. He appeared to have no political ambitions beyond the fervent desire to avoid being dragged into political controversies. His house shewed that he had a shrewd notion of comfort and a good cuisine. The inhabitants of the small huts or *tukels* which dotted the landscape were similarly the counterpart of our own country labourers. Their relations with the farmers were cordial. The men were hard-working, slow to start speaking but fairly voluble when started, and friendly in an unimaginative way. Their women were sometimes buxom, very talkative, and quite unimpressed by the white man. Their children were legion, and delightfully merry and ready to make friends. Agricultural methods were extremely primitive.

‘In this part of the country Abyssinian administration has been in force so long that its oppressive weight is regarded in the same light as any other natural curse, such as a malarial climate or drought—things to be endured without opposition. The Abyssinian population is limited to the local officials, large and small, with their parasitic following of soldiers. The officials seemed busy people, always running hither and thither collecting the dues of their overlords in the capital, or extracting revenue for themselves by the instrumentality of what is called *chigachiq*. This expressive term means intrigue, and usually takes the form of embroiling the Galla in a lawsuit, either against the crown or among themselves, from which escape can only be obtained by bribing the local magistrate. It is obvious that the presence of these functionaries, unproductive, unpaid, and rapacious, cannot but hang as a blight over the countryside. . .

‘The Omo is one of Abyssinia’s great rivers. For

two days our road lay through deserted ridge-and-furrow country, more or less parallel with the river, while to our right rose the mountains of Oche, Hola, and Feco. Then, turning westwards again, we entered the autonomous province of Jimma. We now crossed the southern end of the Feco Mountains, which presented the first really serious obstacle to road-making which we had seen since leaving the capital. These hills were covered with juniper and other coniferous trees. The climate in the forest was cool and damp. Game seemed scarce except for a few bushbuck and numerous leopards. We entered these hills by a winding bridle path with precipitous gradients, and left them by a slightly better-graded track, which led us into the rich undulating country ruled for the Abyssinians by a benevolent despot, Aba Jifar. The aspect of this country was often European. Some of our camping grounds, on the verge of pleasant water-meadows and backed by charming little copses, made it almost impossible to believe that we were really in Africa. The population consisted of Moslem Gallas, and the chiefs affected an Arab type of dress. Abyssinians appeared only as wayfarers, and the peasantry seemed to profit by their own labours to a far greater extent than those under purely Abyssinian rule.¹

Jimma, indeed, is one of the richest parts of Abyssinia. I am not competent to speak of its mineral wealth, but its agricultural potentialities are unquestionably enormous. Under European control it could be made a Garden of Eden. Its inhabitants are essentially traders, and they carry on their commerce throughout Abyssinia. They have small trading villages scattered about the different provinces down to Gardula in the south and Ginir in the east. They

¹ Major L. F. I. Athill, R.F.A., *Through South-western Abyssinia to the Nile*, in *The Geographical Journal* (London, November, 1920, Vol. LVI, pp. 349-54).

speaking the Galla (or Oromo) language, and are sensible enough to appreciate that war, in addition to the hardships it involves, would jeopardise the material prosperity which at present they enjoy. This characteristic was displayed very clearly when the revolution occurred. The whole population, from the King downwards, was solid for Lij Yasu, for as Moslems they sympathised with his Islamic tendencies, and in addition the King had given him his daughter in marriage. Yet they never moved to help him, and as soon as Zauditu was proclaimed Empress the King went up to Addis Ababa with a huge sum in bullion to offer his allegiance to the new government. Jimma is one of the headquarters of the slave trade in Abyssinia. Formerly slaves used to be openly sold in the markets, and although this has now been stopped the traffic is still carried on more or less secretly. On the road we passed several hundred slaves going up to Shoa from Kafa, the province to the south of Jimma. There had recently been a change of governors in Kafa, and as usual the outgoing official was taking away as much as he could in goods and slaves.

There are a number of British Indian subjects in Jiran, the capital of Jimma, and as we approached the town they all came out to meet me. When we were within a few yards of them, they started firing off rifles in honour of our arrival, which had the undignified effect of almost unseating me from my mule. However, their intentions were good, although rather embarrassing. On a hill above is the residence of the *Negus* or King of Jimma, Aba Jifar. One night while I was staying here, His Majesty sent his state trumpeters to serenade me—an honour which I had not experienced before, and which I should not care to experience again. Jimma at this time was in an unsettled condition, but is now comparatively tranquil.

I left Jiran on 22nd April. In front of me lay



[Photograph by Mr. Garabed Ebeyan]

ABA JIFAR, KING OF JIMMA.

an adventurous journey of 150 miles through country hitherto untraversed by any European. If I had known beforehand what it was like, I should never have attempted it. My loads were very unsuitable for difficult routes, consisting as they did in great part of doors, windows, and similar awkward articles for the Consulate I was going to build at Gardula. In the dry season, with light loads, the journey would not have been excessively difficult, but under the conditions which I had to face I can count myself lucky in getting through with my caravan at all.

I passed through mountainous country till I reached the Gojab River, which flows into the Omo and forms the southern boundary of Jimma. The day before I reached the Gojab, one of Aba Jifar's officials, a certain Kanyazmach Arazau, swept into my camp like a whirlwind with a dozen filthy retainers. At a charitable estimate, not one of them had washed for six months. Arazau came into my tent and began by spitting all over my carpet. I did not want to kick him out and have a row, so I turned up the carpet very ostentatiously and bared a piece of turf to receive his expectoration. He looked none too pleased, but took the hint. He then started blustering to the effect that he owned that part of the country and would stop me from going any farther. When I shewed him Ras Tafari's pass, he said 'Oh, he is only a dog'. Luckily I had obtained Aba Jifar's pass, which he had to acknowledge. He went on to tell me pointedly that he had been a freebooter, to which I replied that we did not fear robbers as my men were all well armed and good shots. The statement was more diplomatic than true, for a more atrocious set of marksmen than my men would be difficult to imagine. A bribe would easily have satisfied him, but needless to say he went empty away. Later I found out that this chief had been a poacher in the Lake Rudolf district. He was probably employed

by Aba Jifar as the only way of keeping him in hand.

As I approached the Gojab River, the scenery was extraordinarily beautiful. All around were mountains, and in the distance great ranges. On the slopes the green tints of the new grass, vivid after the recent rains, contrasted with brown patches of rock and stones. The Gojab itself flowed like a silver streak between high conical hills, and on the other side of the river, a slender waterfall, dropping three or four hundred feet, glistened in the sunlight. Down the valley stretched great forests, in which the beautiful Colobus monkey abounds. Unfortunately, owing to my hasty departure from Mega, I had left my camera there, and was unable to obtain any photographic records of this journey.

The Gojab is a wicked river. At the point where we crossed, it is only fifty yards broad, but the current is so swift that there is always danger of being swept off one's feet. The year before, one of the big chiefs on his way to Addis Ababa with a couple of thousand retainers lost nearly two hundred men at this ford. Entering the province of Kullo, we climbed from the valley into the mountains again, amid scenery of surpassing beauty. From one of our camps on a small plateau overlooking the Gojab valley, one could see range after range of mountains to the north, looking exactly like rows of gigantic cones, while in the opposite direction, beyond the rolling turf uplands, towered still higher mountains, with the huts of Waka, the town I was making for, just distinguishable on the summit.

When I reached Waka, the Governor was away, so I called on the Judge, an amiable person domiciled in filthy quarters. He had prepared food for me, and for the sake of policy I partook of it. That night I suffered agonies, and vowed a solemn vow that never again, even if the fate of empires depended on it,

would I eat under similar conditions. The Abyssinians delight in very fat meat, practically raw, and their food is always full of butter and hot sauces. As an especial honour, the servants are deputed to tear off the meat in huge chunks for you to eat and hand it to you with their fingers. If you are not careful, they put butter into your coffee, which makes the most horrible drink I have ever tasted. It always acts on me as an immediate and very effective emetic. In addition, they worry you to death to drink their national liquor, *taj*. They cannot understand why a person does not drink, for they nearly all drink heavily, and think nothing of putting away a bottle of whisky at a sitting.

I had arranged to get a guide at Waka, but at the last moment he failed me, so I was forced to go on without one, inquiring the way as we went. The second day out, we took the wrong track, and had to cut down the side of a hill on to the proper road. At the bottom we came to a small stream tearing like a mill race between perpendicular banks. It was not more than twenty feet broad, but impossible for loaded pack-mules. We went downstream for about a mile and found a bridge of sorts, consisting of a few poles, by which men could cross but not animals. We had to unload the animals, about forty in number, and man-handle the loads over. I then took the mules back to see if I could find a place where they could cross. At a point half a mile up there seemed a chance of getting them over. The stream was so narrow that one could almost have jumped across it, but the water was coming down in a raging torrent, and just below there were rapids. We drove the animals in, and at the first attempt four were swept away and disappeared down the rapids, turning over and over and banging against the rocks like barrels. I gave them up for lost, and for one awful moment I pictured my unpleasant plight with no means of trans-

port. But by an extraordinary stroke of fortune they got wedged at the foot of the bank lower down, and after a struggle we managed to pull them out.

The next point of interest we reached was Kosha, a large garrison town perched on the mountains above the Omo valley. I did not go right up to the town, but camped below it. In the afternoon a small army collected at the top, and a deputation came down to see my passes. The Governor of the country was away in Addis Ababa, and there were only some whippersnappers in charge. I shewed the deputation my passes, and they asked me to send them up to the army on the top of the hill, so I despatched my interpreter and another man with them. Making a shrewd guess at the bluff they were going to try on me, I told the interpreter to shew them the Government passes but to keep Ras Tafari's personal pass to the end as a sort of joker. As I expected, they refused to acknowledge the Government's passes, and threatened to chain my men up and disarm my caravan. My interpreter, producing our joker, then said 'Well, will you also refuse to acknowledge Ras Tafari's pass?' They were all seated at the time, but when they saw the Heir-apparent's seal one of them said 'We had better stand up', which they did while the pass was read. If I had had the local Governor's pass, there would probably have been no trouble in the beginning.

In the meantime I had received a visit from three minor officials who were plainly after bribes. I took a high hand with them, said I would deal with the representative of their chief and no one else, and mentioned casually that this was my third year in the country, so that I was fairly well acquainted with their laws and customs. Eventually they went away no richer than they had come. The great thing with all such people is never to lose your temper, however irritating they may be. If they say 'We

will not let you pass', you smile sweetly and reply 'How very annoying, but of course it can't be helped. We must make ourselves as comfortable as we can here, but I am afraid when the Ministers in Addis Ababa hear how the Consul of a friendly Power has been treated and how their passports have been ignored, there will be very serious trouble. I, for one, should not like to be in that man's shoes. . . .'

From the town of Kosha, the Omo River seems quite close, but it took us fourteen or fifteen hours to reach it. We wound round the hills, gradually descending, with a magnificent panorama before us stretching from Walamo in the east through Kucha and Gofa to Malo in the west. That night we had a terrific thunderstorm right over our heads, and the rain poured through the floors of the tents as though they had been pitched in a river bed. The next day, by a final steep descent, we reached the river. We turned upstream for a short distance through jungle, and then came to Maldokare, the crossing place. Here the path suddenly ended with a twenty-foot drop on to a narrow, rocky beach, easy enough for a man to climb down but utterly impossible for a loaded animal. Even unloaded, the mules found it difficult enough, and several went right into the river. There are no boats or rafts of any description at this particular spot, and in their place the natives use inflated goat-skins. The swimmer slips the cords attached to the skin over his back so that the bag is under his chest. He takes a load of ordinary dimensions across on his head, but for a very heavy load he ties several skins underneath to act as a raft. Passengers are also taken across with these skins. You undress and put your clothes into the skin bag, which is then blown up and secured. The swimmer places the bag in position on his body, and you face him, gripping the bag with hands and teeth and bringing the knees well up under it. Thus you are ready to start. In the case

of animals, each swimmer takes one, catching it by the mane or tail and driving water into its face till it goes in the right direction.

The river at this point is very swift, and when we crossed it was about 120 yards broad. Just above, and also about 800 yards below, are rapids. The art of the swimmer lies in gauging the exact force of the currents, which vary from day to day. On this occasion we allowed about 200 yards for the current, and landed this distance lower down on the other bank. The animals were taken over first, and they all got across safely except two mules, which were not as strong as the others and were swept away and drowned. The loads followed next, and then came my turn. I will admit at once that I was more than a little nervous, especially about crocodiles. But the natives assured me that, although the crocodiles were bad both above and below this spot, they did not frequent the crossing place. (We saw one here, however, the next day.) I decided to swim across without the bags, partly because it seemed a more dignified method, and partly because it is good policy to shew the natives that a white man can do what they can, and do it perhaps a little better. I arranged for two men to swim in front of me, and two behind, hoping in my cowardly heart that the person in the middle would have the best chance if any crocodiles happened to come out of their lairs. Somehow I always feel that these reptiles must find a white man an attractive bait—just as one does not fish for salmon with a black spoon! From the start, however, the dignified consular procession developed into a rout. Not being hindered by the skin bags, I was swept ahead of the men. I had not realised the strength of the current, and was thoroughly scared with thoughts of rapids and crocodiles as I was carried downstream. Fortunately I was just able to reach the other side about 250 yards below the point from which I had started.

To add to my anxiety while I was in the water, the people on the bank kept up a continuous fusillade, which I had not told them to do. I thought at the time that they must have seen crocodiles, and only learnt later that their object had been to keep the reptiles away. In future, if I have any choice, I shall certainly cross the Omo at a place where boats or rafts are available.

The following day we had a very stiff climb up the mountains dominating the Omo valley, and I lost another of my mules, which fell over a precipice and was killed. This was a black mule which I had had ever since I came to Abyssinia. It had been with me on all my wanderings and had never once given in, and I wished the accident could have happened to one of the others. This and the two mules drowned in the Omo were all the animals I lost on this journey, but the greatest inconvenience was caused by the disappearance of all my buckets and three of the cooking-pots, which were taken by a thief while we were occupied in crossing the river. Unfortunately, the mules contracted the deadly mule sickness in the Maze valley, and after I reached Gardula they nearly all died.

On the day I lost my favourite mule, a man came up with a present of butter, worth about fourpence. I did not like the appearance of the man or the butter, and in addition I was feeling irritated. I told him that I did not want it as a gift but would buy it. 'Oh, no,' said he, 'it is a sign of friendship; I don't want to sell it.' 'Very well, give it to my cook.' I knew the fellow wanted the usual present. I took no notice of him and he followed me all day. The road was very hilly, and it rained cats and dogs. In the evening he was still with me. He then became desperate, and said to me, as I knew he would before the sunset, 'What about the butter?' 'I beg your pardon' I retorted, 'I thought it was a present. If

you remember, I said at the start I would buy it if you wished. Here's your fourpence. Good night.' And I chuckled with a fiendish joy as I pictured him returning over the atrocious road in the drenching rain.

We passed through the town of Kosha, and descended into the flatter country called Shambare, which adjoins the district of Gamo. On the way we had to cross the Maze, one of the larger tributaries of the Omo. When in spate this river must have been 500 or 600 yards broad, as could be seen by the drift-wood which had been left high and dry when it subsided. Under such conditions it would be impassable, and as it was we had some difficulty in negotiating it. The bank on the other side was about five feet high, and we had to cut a path before we could get the caravan up, the mules in the meantime being herded on a small island. If the river had suddenly come down in flood, as these rivers are liable to do without notice, we should have been in a very awkward predicament.

After traversing Shambare, we entered the mountainous district of Zala. To save the mules we tried to skirt round the foot of the mountains, but the track gave out and we had to climb over the mountains in the end. One day when we were encamped at the foot of the range, the peasants told us that lions had recently been very troublesome, and on the previous day had killed two oxen while they were actually in the yoke. I could scarcely credit the story, but that same night they came right into our camp, luckily without attacking the mules. It would have been a good place to spend a few days hunting them, but the mosquitoes made life a misery after sunset and through a stupid oversight I had omitted to bring my mosquito net with me, so I decided that it was not worth it. Till one is without it, one never realises what a necessity a mosquito net

is. Without one, you go to bed, and in a few minutes you are forced to put your head under the blankets. Then you begin to suffocate, and the ordeal usually ends in your lighting a candle, arming yourself with a large towel as a club, and reading a book till morning. In addition, it means you are almost certain to get malaria. I laid in the seeds of a very bad attack here which worried me for months afterwards.

From Zala we went on to the village of Balta, which is in Gamo. The difficulties of the mountain track, combined with the constant rain, finished most of my mules, and I was compelled to leave the heavy loads at Balta. Going on with the strongest mules and my personal kit, I spent five days crossing the Gamo Mountains and reached my destination, Gardula, at the end of May, 1917.

CHAPTER X

LIFE ON THE BORDER

Building the Consulate at Gardula—unrest on the border—a plucky dog—a stampede and its sequence—the wrong bottle—a lucky escape—return to Addis Ababa—home on leave.

ON my arrival at Gardula I at once saw Gerazmach Woyessa about the site of my Consulate. After a good deal of discussion I was given a satisfactory site on a small hill some distance from the village. The views from here were superb. In the valley to the east lay Lake Chamo like a glistening jewel, and westward, beyond the lowlands, stretched the mountains of Bako.

As the building of the Consulate was a Government order, all the local chiefs were summoned. Then, when I had pointed out the number and position of the houses I wanted, Woyessa allotted to each his share of the work. This system had many grave drawbacks. For instance, four chiefs would be given one house to build. The house would then be divided into four and each chief given a particular section. Three would get on with the job, but the fourth would plead sickness or some other excuse, so that the house would be erected with a large gap in it.

The weather was wet and horrible while the buildings were being erected, and I did not enjoy myself at all. I well remember starting from my camp very early one morning to walk down the mountain side to Lake Chamo. It was a steep and tedious descent, and the lake was much farther than I had thought. We got there eventually about noon and then had



LAKE CHAMO.



THE CONSULATE, GARDULA.

to turn back. We reached the camp again about 10 o'clock at night after a hard and tiring day. Now, the Abyssinians had warned me not to go down to the lake because of the sickness there. Naturally, when I was laid up with a bad attack of fever a few days later, they all said 'I told you so'. As a matter of fact, I had contracted the fever when camping in the Maze valley on the journey down. One night while I was lying ill, a storm arose which blew with such force that it destroyed most of my camp. The wind removed all the roof of the house I was in with the exception of a small portion under which I pulled my bed. There I lay, huddled in my blankets and racked with fever, while the rain poured down and the tempest shrieked like all the denizens of hell. By this experience I first learnt the most serious disadvantage of my site. Being right on the summit, it was too much exposed to the elements. During the greater part of the year, life up there was positive misery, and owing to the height it was extremely cold.

Day after day I had fever, and I could not shake it off on account of the cold and the damp. My Abyssinian servants were excellent, and no women could have nursed me better. As soon as I was fit to move, I decided to leave the building operations to look after themselves for the time being, and to go down to the border where my presence was required.

The situation on the border was very unsettled. To the west, the Gallāba from between Lakes Rudolf and Stefanie had been raiding the Tertale Boran, murdering and looting as is their wont. More serious still was the question of the Tigre. There had always been small bands of brigands and outlaws, but now these had increased so greatly that to all intents and purposes they controlled the whole of the Boran country from Mega to the Daua River. They had compelled the Government troops to evacuate Gadda-

duma, and the Abyssinian officials could take no action against them with the small forces at their disposal. Such a state of affairs had never existed before, and was undoubtedly due to the internal troubles through which the country was passing.

The principal Tigre leaders were three in number. The biggest scoundrel of the lot, and a noted murderer, was Balambaras Gabra Hidan. His brother, Lij Balai, had a separate band of followers, numbering about sixty. Both Gabra Hidan and Lij Balai were usually to be found in the neighbourhood of Moyale. The third leader, Fitaaurari Tugla, was reported to have a following of several hundreds at Malka Murri on the Daua River.

Strange things happened on the border at this time. I happened to ride into Moyale one day and found that Plowman had left hurriedly with a few men to chase Gabra Hidan, who was in the neighbourhood. Lij Balai, his brother, soon got wind of this, and collected as large a force as he could and sat on a small hill just opposite the British station. He then sent word to say that if his brother were killed or captured he would destroy Moyale. There the two sides sat and watched each other, till Plowman came back a day or two later, having killed not the famous Gabra Hidan, but somebody else whose name I forget. If Balai had attacked Moyale, the results might have been interesting. At any rate I do not think he would have attempted it a second time, brother or no brother.

On another occasion, a young officer, Bamber, on his first visit to the border, went to the wells near Sololo to water. He had with him one Somali orderly. They were close to the wells when a shot rang out. They both lay down and took what cover they could behind a few small boulders. Fire was then opened upon them from the well a very short distance ahead. One of the first shots killed the orderly stone dead,

and the pair were lying so close together that his blood sprinkled Bamber's face. Thus Bamber lay, shooting when opportunity offered, for several hours till darkness fell, when he was able to crawl away and bring assistance. Needless to say, when he returned, the Tigre had made themselves scarce.

On 21st July, 1917, I left Gardula for Boran. On reaching the Sagan River, I found it was in flood and unfordable at the usual place. There was nothing for it but to go upstream where there is another ford. This I did, although it took me two days out of my road. Having negotiated the Sagan, we passed through a belt of thick bush inhabited by herds of buffalo, but I was still suffering from bouts of fever which made me much too weak to go and hunt them. After the belt of bush, we came to the Saba flats, where we saw plenty of game, oryx and hartebeeste being particularly conspicuous. There was also lion spoor about. On 28th July we reached El Wayo. I have evil memories of our next camp, for we happened to pitch our tents in a spot where a small black fly made our lives a perfect hell. This fly did not behave like the generality of flies, but would buzz up and down in a straight line and then make straight for your eye. The discomfort and annoyance of this can be imagined when it is realised that these insects were to be numbered by hundreds and thousands. An ordinary fly is bad enough, but at least it does not enter your eye without first prospecting round the edge and giving you some warning.

On 5th August I arrived once more at my beloved Mega, where I soon began to regain my health. I revelled in golf, and every afternoon, weather permitting, I used to go out and play. One evening, I remember, when playing the last 'hole', which was quite close to my camp, I made a rather high lofted shot. Unfortunately it went beyond the 'hole' and fell plump on the completely bald head of the

most venerable and most dignified of my retainers. From there it bounced to a surprising height without seeming to do any damage to the skull. I expressed my sorrow to the old man in the only suitable currency. The incident, however, gave me food for reflection. Suppose that it had happened two or three generations ago, and that the man had had his skull fractured and died. Under the old Ethiopian law his relatives would have had the right, if they refused the blood-money, to take my life exactly as I had taken his. Would this have meant that, day after day, I should have had to stand bare-headed while the infuriated relatives with a niblick and hundreds of gutty balls (the rubber core not having been invented) kept on bombarding me with high lofted approaches, till one chanced to fall on my cranium with fatal results? What a fitting end to some pervid and profane golfer!

An authentic case of this kind is handed down. There were two children picking fruit, one high up in the tree and the other on the ground. The branch on which the former was sitting broke, and he fell and killed the lad beneath but escaped unhurt himself. Owing to an estrangement between the families, the relatives of the dead child refused to take the blood-money but demanded the life of the innocent cause of the accident. The *Afa Negus* (Chief Justice), after vainly trying to make them alter their decision, pronounced sentence of death, but on condition that the boy was to be placed beneath the tree and one of the dead boy's family was to climb up into it and execute the judgement by falling down upon him. Upon this the aggrieved family preferred to accept the blood-money.

At certain times of the year, a species of biting horse-fly makes its appearance in the lowlands below the escarpment. Its attentions are so persistent and annoying that it drives the lions up to the highlands.

During this period a few generally pay a visit to Mega Mountains, and as there is no game there to speak of they take heavy toll of the domestic animals. They only stay a few weeks and then return to their old haunts.

Leopards, however, are a much greater nuisance at Mega than lions. I had a big cattle kraal, and inside it a small, strongly-built log house in which I kept my goats. One night a leopard managed to make a small opening just above the door. He crawled through this and killed every one of the eighteen goats and sheep that were inside. They were all killed in the same way—bitten through the jugular vein—and the leopard had not eaten, nor attempted to eat, any of them. Again and again I tried to trap or shoot the Mega leopards, but they were nearly always too clever for me.

I had with me at Mega a little pure-bred spaniel, called John, originally given to me by a Greek who had brought him up from Nairobi. He was a strange dog, very timid but most affectionate. His manners were perfect, and he never shewed his affection by licking. He only licked my hand once in his life, when I returned after a long absence. Although he was so timid, he was the pluckiest animal I have ever seen with leopards. Twice in the night-time he tackled them alone and was severely wounded. On the third and last occasion a leopard came to the camp in the afternoon. It was seen and followed by my men. In the meantime, John, without any canine companions, came up and tackled it alone. Again and again he went for the leopard, biting it until he was so badly mauled that he could not move. He was carried home, and thus I found him on my return. He was just able to recognise me and wag his tail feebly. I did everything I could for him, but with no avail, and the gallant little fellow passed away. I shall never see his equal. There are no dogs in

Abyssinia in the least resembling a spaniel, and the natives could not understand John. Most of them used to think he was a strange species of young lion.

During the summer of 1917 a nasty experience befell me in the course of one of my trips from Mega to Moyale. We had camped for the night about half-way, and our five horses were grazing peacefully when a lion appeared and they stampeded. The men went after them, and after several hours I began to be worried by the fact that they did not return. I was left with one small boy, and I found to my dismay that we had only one sandwich and half a water-bottle of water between us. We had still about 40 miles to go to reach Moyale, and *neither the boy nor I knew this route*, as we had taken a new track through the bush. The men did not turn up during the night, and the boy and I set out before dawn in order to get as far as possible before the sun was high. There was no proper track, and the thick bush made it difficult to keep one's bearings. After trudging for hour after hour, I had to confess to myself that I had got the various hills confused in my mind and that we were completely lost. The one sandwich had gone long ago, and there was less than a teacupful of water left, and we did not know when we should get any more. I made up my mind that we had got to keep going, in spite of the blazing sun, until we found some landmark which we recognised beyond any possibility of error. Eventually, about the middle of the afternoon, we found ourselves in the hills below Deka Roba and knew in which direction we should go. To make walking easier in the heat, we took off our trousers and plodded on towards Moyale. The boy now began to tire, and I had some trouble in getting him to 'stick it'. At sunset the arrival of two exhausted, trouserless persons at Moyale provided a source of merriment among the officers of the station. But all the quips about my appearance

did not diminish my thankfulness for our lucky escape from what might have been a more than unpleasant predicament. I felt the effects of the day's exertion for the best part of a week. To complete the story, I should mention that the horses whose stampeding was the cause of all the trouble were recovered in time, one of them having been mauled by an hyena.

This was not the only occasion on which I was lost on the way to Moyale. The following summer I had another adventurous trip. As the Tigre were very active, I deemed it inadvisable to go direct and decided to take an alternative route which goes down the escarpment below Deka Roba and then joins the main road from Marsabit to Moyale. We camped for lunch, and in the afternoon I rode on ahead with my boy, Taklu, in order to reach Moyale the same night. To add to our discomfort, we had only just set off when a heavy rainstorm burst. Neither I nor Taklu knew this road well, but it never entered my head that we could possibly go astray. We pushed along steadily, cheered by the prospect of the pleasant evening in store for us at Moyale. At this time, we had a catch-phrase on the border—'The Lord will provide'—whenever supplies were short or things were not as bright as might be desired, and, in the aimless way one does on long journeys when there is no white man to talk to, I kept humming this phrase to myself as we jogged along.

Late in the afternoon, when we should have been close to the path which leads up the escarpment to Moyale, I could see no sign of it. Search as we would, neither I nor Taklu could find it, and at length we were driven to the conclusion that we had taken a cattle track instead of following the main path. It was now dark, and too late to retrace our steps. We struck across towards the point where we thought the road wound up the escarpment. It rained hard at intervals, and the bush was dense and of a thorny

variety which not only tore our clothes to tatters but necessitated our going on foot and dragging the mules behind us. We soon got hopelessly lost, but I was too enraged by the sequence of misfortunes to sit still and wait for morning, which was probably the wisest thing we could have done in the circumstances. Moreover, as we had neither food nor blankets and the ground was wet, inaction seemed out of the question. Thus we went on, hour after hour, till we were both dog-tired and I was so thirsty that I was drinking constantly from the muddy puddles left by the rain.

About 2 a.m. we struck a path, and as the bush was less dense here I mounted my mule. I had not gone far when I was startled by a shot fired at me from some bushes a few yards to my right. I dismounted—rapidly. Then came a voice from the same bush asking who we were, and the next moment I discovered that the speaker was one of my own men, Haili by name, who had mistaken us for Tigre. By one chance in a million, we had struck the camp of my main caravan.

Poor Haili was very sorry, but I could not blame him for his vigilance which had given my nerves a nasty jar. He met a dreadful end not long after this incident. He was taking letters, in company with another man, from Maji to Addis Ababa. Passing through the Tishana country, they were surprised by the natives, and Haili was captured. He was taken alive to the chief's village, where he was kept for five days. Each evening there was feasting and dancing while he was brutally tortured, until on the fifth night he died. His body was then divided up and eaten.

In September, 1917, I arranged an interview with Lij Balai, at which Gerazmach Gashi was present, and discussed the situation from the point of view of the British frontier authorities, who were gravely

concerned about the constant inroads of Tigre hunting parties. I stated that we did not want to be enemies of the Tigre, but that if they persisted in crossing in the face of all warnings, their blood would be on their own heads. The robber chief was quite polite, and admitted frankly that he knew there were many hunting parties on the British side; but these, he said, were not Tigre proper, but independent groups of robbers and hunters. He added that he had recently chained up some of Gashi's soldiers for robbing in their name. This shews what power the Tigre had at this time, for Gashi was the Government representative. Our interview was as satisfactory as any such interview ever is in Abyssinia, and Lij Balai undertook to recall Gabra Hidan, who was said to be in British territory, to prevent all Tigre under his control from crossing the frontier, and to return the ransom money paid for the release of certain British subjects seized by Tigre.

A remarkable instance of the manner in which these predatory bands are recruited was given me by Lij Balai. He said that Ato Haili, one of the men who had led the movement against me in 1916, to whom I have already referred, had written asking to be allowed to join the Tigre, but they had refused. Haili had also had negotiations with the Tigre in connection with rifles. When his help was rejected, he crossed the border with a few followers and started hunting on his own account. The incident shews very well how much reliance could be placed upon the integrity of the average Abyssinian official on the border at this time.

During the next few weeks, both the Abyssinian chiefs and myself carried on negotiations with the Tigre leaders. My own position was delicate, as I had to be most careful not to let the Abyssinians think I was meddling in their affairs. Lij Balai at length asked me to use my good offices to get a pardon

for his brother, Gabra Hidan, who had killed several men in Addis Ababa during the revolution. From the point of view of both the British and the Abyssinian officials, it would have been a godsend to get this leader and his band away from the border; and as he intended to return to Shoa if he obtained a pardon over the seal of Ras Tafari, I urged the British Minister to support the request. While the decision was in abeyance, the border was tolerably quiet, and I returned to Gardula, calling at Mega for all the baggage which I had left behind there when compelled to make my hasty departure the year before.

A most amusing incident happened while I was on a visit to Moyale about this time. An influential Abyssinian official called to see me, and I received him in the mess. The servants were out at the time, and as I wanted to give him a drink, I went to get one myself. I could find no whisky or brandy, but at last discovered a liqueur bottle. I brought this and filled a port-glass for my guest, but did not take any myself. We sat down and talked, and when he had drunk half the glass he put it down and asked me to excuse him from drinking the rest, as it was rather strong. I chaffed him about this, and told him that in our country men thought nothing of drinking two or three glasses in an evening. He then took his leave, and I sat at the table writing. A few minutes afterwards, a boy rushed in and told me that my guest had collapsed outside the mess and was very ill. I hurried out and saw him huddled up on the ground, with eyes rolling, and pale as death. Naturally I was seriously concerned. I tore round to the house of one of the officers who had some knowledge of medicine and begged him to come at once, asking him at the same time in an innocent way whether they kept any poison with their liqueurs. He said 'Of course not', and ran to the dispensary to get some

medicine. In the meantime, I returned to the patient and poured water over his head and made him drink as much as possible.

He was still looking very ill when Hawkins arrived with some medicine. The Abyssinian swallowed a dose and soon began to revive. 'What on earth did you give him?' asked Hawkins. 'Only some of your beastly liqueur' I replied. 'Go and taste it' he said. I did so, and took about three drops which burnt my tongue like fire. 'Good heavens!' I cried, 'what is the stuff?' Hawkins then told me that it was vermouth full of the very strongest chillies, which had been soaking in it for days and days. It was not intended for drinking; they used two or three drops of it in their soup to give a fillip to their jaded appetites. I did not give the show away to the patient, but explained to him that he must have had a touch of the sun for the liqueur to have affected him so much. He took it all in good faith, and as he went away he said he knew that Englishmen were strong and that their drink was strong, but how they could drink *that* drink he could not possibly understand. To this day the story of the welcome guest and the fiery appetite-reviver is a great joke against me at Moyale.

On reaching Gardula I expected to find the Consulate buildings finished and ready for occupation, but again my hopes were disappointed. Nothing had been done in my absence. The Abyssinians are certainly the biggest prevaricators who ever existed in matters of this kind. They promise in such a plausible way and with such an air of finality that, until one knows them very well, one is apt to be taken in. However, I soon got men to complete the houses, and moved in early in December. There happened to be a Greek at Gardula just then, and he had made a fireplace in one of the huts for me. One night, soon after the hut was finished, I had

turned in and was sleeping very badly. Eventually I dropped off to sleep with the blanket over my head. The next thing I was conscious of was being wakened during the small hours of the morning by my headman, who came knocking at the door for medicine for one of my men who was ill. Dazed with sleep, I got up, lit a candle, unlocked the door, and gave him the medicine he wanted. I noticed casually what I thought was a thick fog. I turned in again, but, lying in my bed, I tried to think how the fog could have entered my room. I could not understand it, and finally I lit a candle again to investigate. The room was now so thick that breathing was difficult, but I was still so dazed that I did not realise the cause, till I passed the fireplace and happened to see a red-hot cinder drop. This caused me to put my head under the fireplace and look up. To my horror I saw that the whole wall was on fire, burning slowly upwards. It was the work of a moment to rush outside and blow the alarm. I then tried frantically to check the fire with the water that was still in the bath from the previous evening, but this had little effect. My men were soon on the scene, and without an instant's delay we started to knock down the walls on each side of the chimney. In this way we just managed to save the thatch and the house. If that man had not wakened me, *the only time* I have ever been called up for medicine, I should have been suffocated or burnt to death. The Greek whom I have mentioned dreamt that I was in great danger that night, and when he was told about the fire next morning, he said 'I knew the Consul was in danger last night because of my dream'.

I stayed at Gardula till 29th December, and then left for Addis Ababa. On the way I spent a day or two by Lake Chamo fishing. This lake has always had a great attraction for me. There are some huge

fish in it, and I have had many a thrill. There are also a lot of hippopotamus. Some distance beyond the lake, I left my heavy caravan behind, and travelling quickly reached the capital without incident on 13th January, 1918. I remained in Addis Ababa till 5th March, 1918, when I went on leave.

CHAPTER XI

BORDER TROUBLES

Back to Abyssinia—Tigre in force on the border—joint Anglo-Abyssinian campaign proposed—fourth journey south—situation in Boran—ambushed by Tigre.

IN January, 1919, my leave being up, I returned to Abyssinia. I travelled back *via* Rome and Taranto, and from the latter place took a troopship, the *Kashgar*, to Port Said. Here, as there was no Messageries boat leaving for a few days, I obtained a passage by a French tramp, which was bound for Madagascar but was calling at Jibuti *en route*. The skipper would not tell me how much the trip would cost me, but said I must leave that to him. I was given a large deck cabin to myself, and had a very pleasant voyage. On arrival at Jibuti I was charged only five pounds, food and wine included. At that time the Messageries were extorting seventy-five pounds for the same passage.

On reaching Addis Ababa at the beginning of February, 1919, I learnt that a condition amounting to little less than anarchy had developed in the south, and that recent reports described a complicated situation on the border which was causing much anxiety.

During the previous year the Tigre had increased in strength and extended their activities over a wide area. They had compelled the Abyssinian officials and troops to withdraw from Gaddaduma and Godoma, and had pillaged and murdered the Boran on both sides of the frontier indiscriminately. A large number

of Abyssinian officers and several hundred troops were sent down to the Boran province to deal with the Tigre, but the remedy turned out worse than the disease. Many of the Abyssinian Boran sought refuge from the Tigre in British territory. When Gerazmach Woyessa and Gerazmach Gashi arrived with their men, they demanded the return of these people. Owing to the lack of sufficient permanent water in the neighbourhood of Moyale to supply the newcomers and their stock, Bamber, the Acting District Commissioner, had no choice but to order them to return, in spite of their protestations that only robbery and ill-treatment awaited them if they went. Instead of going where the Abyssinians wanted them to go, the Boran moved to Gaddaduma and Godoma, bribing the Tigre who held these places to protect them (from the Abyssinians) and to allow them to water their stock. The Abyssinians believed that the British officials were responsible for the disappearance of their Boran subjects and were naturally annoyed. They were too much afraid of the Tigre to go to Gaddaduma and Godoma to collect the wanderers from that neighbourhood. So relations became strained, and time after time the frontier was crossed by Abyssinian troops, who did not confine themselves to looking for their own Boran but carried off cattle belonging to British Boran. Meanwhile the Tigre themselves were not inactive, but their misdeeds were little worse than those committed by the people sent down to suppress them. The Tigre, however, were the primary cause of all the trouble, and it was decided that energetic measures must be taken to deal with them.

In February, 1919, the British Minister (Captain the Hon. W. G. Thesiger) proposed to the Abyssinian Government a joint campaign against the Tigre. At a meeting with Ras Tafari and his ministers, Captain Thesiger outlined a rough plan of campaign,

to which the Abyssinians agreed. British troops were to occupy a line from El Adi through Torbi, Moyale, and Gaddaduma to Derkali, while the Abyssinians attacked the Tigre from their side. I was to accompany the Abyssinian force as liaison officer, while they were to send a reliable officer to remain with the British troops for the same purpose. Either force was to be empowered to cross the frontier in pursuit of Tigre on condition that they warned the nearest post and ensured co-operation. It was understood that the British occupation of wells on the Abyssinian side of the frontier was purely temporary—for the duration of the campaign. In order to avoid the possibility of 'incidents' at Moyale, the Abyssinian authorities despatched orders to Woyessa and Gashi to withdraw to Mega while preparations for the joint campaign were completed.

On 17th February, I left Addis Ababa for the south and reached Gardula on 8th March. The buildings which I had erected with so much difficulty had been damaged by gales, but still served their purpose in giving me a place to keep my stores in. During my absence the influenza epidemic had swept through the country, and one of my men had died of it, but the rest had now recovered. Depositing my heavy baggage at Gardula, I set out again on 12th March, and six days later arrived at Mega, where Fitaurari Mangasha, a respectable old gentleman of about 65, Gerazmach Woyessa, and Gerazmach Gashi, and other officers were assembled with their troops. I found the Abyssinians, and Gashi in particular, in a pitiable state of terror.

The last despatch received at Addis Ababa from Moyale before my departure for the south was dated 25th January. On the morning of the 28th, some of Dido Doyo's men came running in to Bamber, the Acting District Commissioner, and reported that the Abyssinians had lifted all his cattle. On going

out, Bamber saw the cattle, a mile or so away, well in British territory, being driven over. He sent out a few *askaris* (native soldiers) to ask what it meant, and they were immediately fired on by the Abyssinians. Crowds of Abyssinians were seen to leave their *boma* and run down towards the firing, so a relief party was sent out to bring in our men. This was accomplished without casualties. At an interview with Bamber next day, Gashi maintained vehemently that his men had been fired on in their own territory. Two or three days later, it was discovered that the Abyssinians' *boma* was empty, and that all the troops had retired to Mega.

When I saw Gashi there a few weeks later, the only excuse he could offer for this affray was that the British official had promised to return the Abyssinian Boran and their cattle which had crossed the frontier and had then failed to do so, and that, in addition, his men were shot at by British soldiers while driving the Boran cattle away on their side. Gashi's contentions are not worth a moment's consideration, and the best explanation of his action in the affair that I can think of is this. The Abyssinians lose a source of revenue whenever a Boran crosses the frontier, and as they love money more than anything else, it can be imagined that they were considerably annoyed when the Boran in large numbers took refuge from the Tigre in British territory. It appears that Gashi's known friendliness to us was used as a taunt against him, and he probably thought that by crossing over and seizing the Boran and their cattle he would regain his popularity as well as his property. No doubt he was given to understand that inaction would be considered as proof of his having been bought by the British.

I discussed the Tigre question with Gashi and Woyessa, but as they had not yet received despatches from their Government, I could not say anything

about the joint campaign. I told Gashi, however, that reinforcements had been ordered down and that we were going to help them to fight the Tigre. He was suspicious, and said that our people had entered into an alliance with the Tigre against the Abyssinians and had given them cartridges; but I assured him that this was not true and that the rumour had only been circulated to create ill-feeling between the two countries. We arranged to go down to Moyale together and discuss affairs with the British officials there.

That night I was wakened by the blowing of war horns, and a messenger was sent up to me to say that Dekä Roba had been surrounded by the Tigre and was going to be attacked. All the soldiers left at once, and I started next morning, as I had told Gerazmach Gashi that in such an eventuality I would give him what help I could. On reaching Dekä Roba I found that the Tigre had not attacked after all, but the garrison were in a state of great alarm and seemed delighted to have my force of sixteen rifles. I told them plainly that I could not understand why they did not carry the war into the enemy's camp, but nothing I said would rouse them to action. In fact, both officers and men had completely lost their morale, and my impression was that a hundred of them would turn tail before a score of Tigre.

I slept at Dekä Roba and left on 24th March for Moyale. Gashi was much too frightened to accompany me and warned me to be very careful on the road. We left in the afternoon and slept in some thick bush. The next morning I again cautioned my men and ordered them to load their rifles. We were within a few miles of Moyale and were about to enter a belt of bush when I heard my leading man blowing his whistle violently. I hurried forward and saw a body of men coming in line from the bush towards the path. It was easy to see from their clothes and

general appearance that they were Tigre. At the same time the clicking of bolts told me that my own men had their rifles loaded and at full cock. I called out to them on no account to fire. This is always the danger with Abyssinians; they are very excitable, and in their hands a loaded rifle may go off at any moment. The position of our two parties was rather like that of two terriers standing growling at each other but wanting a little more provocation to begin to fight. My own feelings were appreciably disturbed by the fact that there was a man, partly concealed by an ant-heap, who was obviously taking a personal interest in my movements. I was much relieved as my pack-mules, one by one, entered the thick bush and passed through the cordon. Just before I entered, the Tigre's headman came up and spoke to me. He asked for some cartridges, but I told him I had none. He next wanted me to sell them some; but this also I was unable to do. He then inquired whether there was any news from up-country. I gratified this curiosity to some extent, but he would have been a little surprised if I had told him that in my pocket I had instructions to the officer at Moyale to declare war on himself and his fellow-bandits.

At Moyale I found Kittermaster, the officer in charge of the Northern Frontier District, and Bamber, the Acting District Commissioner, and was able to discuss the whole situation in detail. I have already mentioned that the Abyssinians suddenly retired from Moyale a few days after the 'incident' which occurred on 28th January. In the light of Gashi's blustering attitude after that affair, it seemed likely that their withdrawal was only temporary—for the purpose of collecting additional forces, with which to reoccupy Moyale. Information brought in from Mega by traders and others during the next two or three weeks tended to confirm this view. For at first wild appeals for help against the British were

circulated by the Abyssinians. Reflecting on what they had done and how they could explain it away, Gashi and the others began to shake in their shoes (a condition in which I found them almost literally), and remained quietly at Mega. Our people at Moyale, however, did not learn of this till much later, and expected an attack in force from one day to the next. Meanwhile, certain of the Tigre leaders entered into communication with them, and tolerably cordial relations were established on the understanding that the Tigre kept on the Abyssinian side of the frontier and did not interfere with British subjects. Kittermaster's reason for cultivating friendship with the Tigre was very simple and natural. It was his duty to guard the frontier and to protect the Boran living in British territory. The troops at his disposal were too few to defend the frontier properly, and hence he could not protect the Boran by force of arms. But at this moment it was possible in a measure to play off the Tigre against the official Abyssinians. The Tigre controlled the Abyssinian wells which the Boran were compelled to use, and under fear of an attack by the Abyssinians these Tigre were inclined to be friendly with the British. Had Kittermaster repudiated their advances, they could have continued to raid the Boran with impunity. Kittermaster also told me that he had given some cartridges to Gerazmach Zodi, one of the Tigre leaders, as a private present for some help he had afforded him. (So Gashi had been right after all, and I had been wrong in denying his assertions.)

The situation thus disclosed had a decidedly Gilbertian aspect. We were now committed to co-operation with the Abyssinian Government in a campaign against the Tigre; yet when I arrived on the scene at Moyale with news of this decision and with orders to work out the scheme, I found that all this time we were really on better terms with the Tigre *against*

whom we were going to fight than with the Abyssinians whom we were going to help. This was one of those mischances which are bound to occur from time to time in a country where communications are so slow and uncertain as in Abyssinia. One result of the rapprochement with the Tigre was to intensify the suspicions which the Abyssinians had of our designs; they interpreted our action as a preliminary to a *coup d'état* by which we intended with the help of the Tigre to seize the Boran country. We could only wait and hope that, ultimately, the arrival of Gashi's son, Lij Wandim Aganyu, with despatches from the Abyssinian Government about the joint operations against the Tigre, would dispel these wholly unwarranted suspicions.

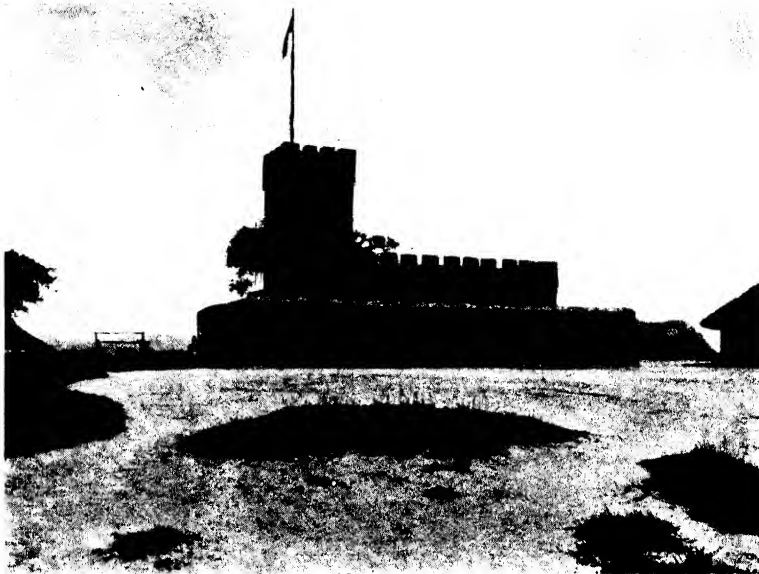
By the end of March, all our plans were laid, and all we had to do, it seemed, was to wait for the Abyssinian army to arrive on the scene. That army did not arrive till the middle of June! In the meantime, the Tigre themselves precipitated an armed conflict.

CHAPTER XII

JOINT OPERATIONS ON THE BORDER

The campaign opens—a rift in the lute—occupation of Gaddaduma—Fitaaurari Mukria and his army arrive—golf at Mega—I give the Fitaaurari a lesson—Abyssinian hockey—defeat of the Tigre—a shooting match—arrest of Bokala—an Abyssinian review—Mukria visits Moyale—he and his army leave Boran.

AT nightfall on 4th April, 1919, Kittermaster received a report that some cattle had been carried off by Tigre and taken across the frontier. He at once sent out all available police to track them down, and about nine o'clock in the evening learnt that the cattle had been discovered in the Abyssinian *boma*, which had been occupied by the Tigre after Gashi and Woyessa withdrew from Moyale. This raid by the Tigre clearly violated the terms of their truce with Kittermaster, and the latter had no hesitation in deciding to recover the cattle by force of arms if necessary, although, naturally, he wished to avoid hostilities, until his reinforcements came up. He therefore ordered the sergeant in charge of the police to stand fast, but to attack instantly if any attempt were made during the night to remove the cattle. About 4 a.m. next morning, he despatched Bamber (Acting District Commissioner) and Glanville (Lieutenant, K.A.R.) with a detachment of King's African Rifles and a Lewis gun to join the constabulary who had been on guard all night. At dawn, in accordance with his instructions, Bamber sent to the Tigre leader a letter demanding the return of the cattle, and threatening



MOYALE FORT, KENYA COLONY.



KING'S AFRICAN RIFLES, MOYALE.

in case of refusal to recover them by force. The usual shilly-shallying answer came back—the cattle were Abyssinian cattle, a man must be sent to identify them, and so forth. After an hour's parley, Bamber began to suspect that the Tigre might be hoping for help, and decided to send them an ultimatum stating that, if the gate of the *boma* was not opened forthwith and the cattle driven out, he would attack. The Tigre returned a defiant answer, and the attack was accordingly delivered at once.

The fight was short, but sharp enough while it lasted. The attack was launched against a strong thorn *boma*, manned by a superior force of riflemen who were fully prepared. Under heavy fire, our men advanced by sectional rushes across almost open ground and reached the *boma* with the loss of one native constable mortally wounded. An entrance was forced with only one further casualty. Most of the Tigre now fled, but some made a stand in one of the houses. In trying to clear this house, a corporal of the police who had gallantly rushed forward to break in the door was shot dead in the doorway. A K.A.R. *askari*, who was beside the corporal, seized the rifle as it was fired, but too late to save the man's life. He succeeded, however, in firing his own rifle with the other hand and killed the Tigre. The known casualties of the Tigre amounted to five killed and two wounded. The cattle were driven out and restored to their owners, who had been waiting in the offing, and, after pursuing the Tigre into the bush as far as was prudent, our troops were reassembled and brought back to the fort. The engagement, which lasted two hours, was a credit to all concerned and formed a most auspicious opening to the campaign.

While these events were taking place, I had rejoined Gashi and Woyessa at Deka Roba, where I found that Lij Wandim Aganyu, Gashi's son, had

now arrived from Addis Ababa with orders from Fitaurari Hapta Georgis, the Minister for War. These orders were not written, but were delivered by word of mouth. Wandim Aganyu had already given them to Gashi and Woyessa, but he repeated them in my presence. Unfortunately, on one important point—the occupation of Gaddaduma by our troops for the duration of the campaign—, his message was at variance with the arrangement which we understood had been agreed to in Addis Ababa. He stated that Ras Tafari and the Fitaurari had said that we could draw water at Gaddaduma (a superfluous thing to say because we already enjoyed that right by treaty), and that we might, if necessary, stop there for a day or a day and a half. At the time I was firmly convinced that Lij Wandim Aganyu was not speaking the truth, and that he had been prompted by Gashi and Woyessa to omit mention of the agreement by which we were temporarily to occupy Gaddaduma. Now, the occupation of Gaddaduma was essential to the success of the joint campaign. Owing to the waterless character of the country, we could not effectively patrol the frontier east of Moyale without it; and if this section of the frontier was not effectively patrolled, the Tigre would never be cornered and smashed by the Abyssinians. Without Gaddaduma our forces would be in a hopeless strategic position. The matter was vital, and on 7th and 8th April I talked for hours upon it to Gashi and Woyessa. In the end I had to tell Gashi that this was not a small local affair but an important question which had been decided by our two Governments; I assured him that it had been definitely settled in Addis Ababa, when Captain Thesiger and myself met Ras Tafari, Ras Kasa, and Fitaurari Hapta Georgis. If they denied this, I said I should like to have their refusal in writing, which—needless to say—I did not get.

I returned to Moyale to report this first rift in the lute to the officers there. We all felt that the best thing to do was to occupy Gaddaduma as soon as possible in accordance with our interpretation of the agreement made in Addis Ababa, and thus put the onus of ordering us to leave upon Gashi and Woyessa. We guessed that they would be afraid to assume so heavy a responsibility; but if they did, we could take a leaf out of their own book and say that we would leave if they could shew us their written authority to that effect, but without that we could not think of breaking our agreement with their Government. There remained, however, the chance that they would take concerted action against us in order to turn us out; this was a remote possibility, but it made me uneasy because I knew how highly the Abyssinians prized Gaddaduma.

While preparations were set afoot at Moyale for the descent upon Gaddaduma, I rejoined Gashi and his colleague at Mega. Early in the morning of 25th April, Captain McCawley with 50 K.A.R., 1 machine-gun, and 2 Lewis guns, occupied Gaddaduma without opposition. (The Tigre, as is their custom, had evacuated the wells when the rains broke, and the Abyssinians had been too afraid to return.) The operation was very skilfully planned and executed, for not a word leaked out until I received the official notification on 2nd May, whereupon I at once informed the Abyssinian authorities.

Contrary to my expectations, and much to my relief, Gashi received the news well, and the next day we discussed the whole question quite amicably, and Gashi promised to try to get 300 local soldiery (which he could not possibly do) to help us until the arrival of the Abyssinian troops from the north, of which there was still no sign.

During May I stayed mostly at Mega, and found that the place was honeycombed with Tigre sym-

pathisers and spies. Incidentally, I learnt that the Tigre were now very bitter against me on the ground that I was the originator of all activities against them (which, in a sense, was true). Meanwhile, the Government soldiery (or such as had not yet deserted) vied with the Tigre in practising the usual extortion and robbery upon the Boran, and traders continued to bring down cartridges hidden in coffee and flour and sell them at a huge profit to the Tigre. The latter used to walk about openly, and one day they bought no fewer than six rifles in the village right under Gashi's nose. Robberies were so common as to pass almost unnoticed. The majority of the people at Mega firmly believed that we were going to declare war on Abyssinia, and that the troops who were coming down were to fight us and not the Tigre; and Gashi told me one day that some of the Tigre had made overtures to help the Government troops to drive us out of Gaddaduma. How this absurd rumour obtained currency is not difficult to understand. So far, the only message received from Fitaurari Hapta Georgis had been the one brought down by Lij Wandim Aganyu, who was only a youth, and this message, moreover, was only an oral one. Nothing which Lij Wandim Aganyu said would happen had happened, and people did not know what to believe.

Meanwhile, things began to get lively on our side of the border as a result of the inauguration of a strong policy against the Tigre. On the night of 14th May, two Tigre burnt down the house of the station's Abyssinian interpreter in the Moyale bazaar. On 17th May, a convoy of food from Moyale to Gurre with a small escort of constabulary was attacked on the road by Tigre and one syce killed. On the same day, Jenkins, who had arrived at Derkali from Garba Hari with a platoon of K.A.R., chanced upon a band of about thirty Tigre and killed nine of them at a cost of three men wounded.

Towards the end of May, news came that the Abyssinian army for which we had been waiting was now in Boran, and on 7th June Fitaurari Mukria¹ with about 1,000 men arrived at Mega. He had with him a number of important chiefs and also the notorious Kanyazmach Bokala, Fitaurari Waldi's son. Upon hearing this, I left Deka Roba, where I happened to be, and reached Mega on 9th June. In the afternoon I paid my official visit to the Fitaurari and was received with the greatest respect, the whole army turning out to welcome me. On this occasion only formalities were discussed, but we arranged to meet again next morning to talk over official matters.

This second meeting was extremely interesting. Fitaurari Mukria sent all his officers and attendants away, and he and I had a long *tête-à-tête*. We discussed the state of affairs on the border frankly together, and I soon saw that the Fitaurari really meant business, and that he was intending to deal faithfully, not only with the Tigre themselves, but also with the local chiefs who had been helping them surreptitiously. He electrified me by saying that he was going to chain up Kanyazmach Bokala in a day or two, and that he had sent for Ato Haili (the judge turned Tigre) and would hang him on his arrival. Best of all, he said he had been told that we were to occupy Gaddaduma during the hostilities owing to the lack of water on our side of the frontier. In fact, I had every reason to be satisfied with the attitude which he adopted.

In the afternoon, he asked me to go to his camp, and shewed me some messages which he had just received from the Tigre leaders, Tugla, Zodi, Warke, and Haili. The letters were to the effect that the Tigre were greatly frightened because, as they said,

¹ Fitaurari Mukria was the son of the late Dajazmach Garmami. He was married to Waizaro Asalafach, the wealthy widow of Dajazmach Ilma, and had one young daughter, Ababach. His country, quite a small one, was Chincha, in Gamo.

the British had thousands of troops on the border with scores of machine-guns, and that they now expected Fitaurari Mukria to make everything right for them, as he was their father and only hope. Mukria told me he was replying with honeyed words to the effect that they were his children, nothing would please him better than to make friends with them, and they must come and see him. 'When they come to see me' he added nonchalantly, 'I shall destroy them all.'

Next day, 11th June, Mukria held a secret council of war, to which I was invited. It was decided that the army would move from Mega in a few days and march straight upon Arero, and attack the Tigre's stronghold there, if they refused to surrender. The subsequent plan of campaign was to sweep down to and along the Dawa River, and then to return by way of Gaddaduma and Moyale. A proposal to go to Moyale first was considered, and rejected on the ground that it would give the Tigre a chance of escaping.

Now, on the top of the mountain at Mega, there is an extensive grassy plain surrounded by higher ground. Over this I used to play golf on most afternoons when I had nothing else to do, and after much experimenting I had worked out quite a good course with its long holes and short holes complete. The greens were a difficulty, but I got over this by making use of the bleached skulls of dead bullocks which stood out conspicuously here and there on the plain. The local rule was that you holed out when you were within a club's length of the skull. The pleasure I managed to get out of golf under these conditions never palled. I used to have thrilling matches against a stiff bogey, and, to make it more exciting, I used to promise my caddie a monetary reward if I went round under a certain score. My clubs were all christened and known to my caddie by name. I had

only to say 'Give me Ato Gabra Maskal', when my driver was pressed into my hand at once. My niblick had the uncommon name of Ato Jawe, which being interpreted means Mr. Boaconstrictor. As an amusement, I made an exhaustive study of the psychology of golf, and must have collected nearly every well-known book on the game. There were times when I really thought I had discovered the secret of consistency. The details would be recorded with scrupulous care in a note-book I kept for the purpose—only to be contradicted by a totally new scheme which I would discover a little later. That note-book is now simply a collection of conflicting theories and statements, and I am still looking for the philosopher's stone of consistent golf.

Fitaurari Mukria was a sportsman, and had heard of my playing this queer game. He asked me to have a game with him, and I willingly consented. Accordingly, the day after the secret council of war, we went out together in the afternoon, followed—to my alarm—by most of his army. As it was my duty to demonstrate to the Fitaurari the correct way of driving a golf ball, my feelings can be better imagined than described. I took up my position, with the Fitaurari and his higher officers immediately behind me and a huge gallery of Abyssinian soldiers on three sides. In Abyssinia no awed hush surrounds you at the tee. Instead, the spectators keep up a constant chatter and even ask questions while you are in the act of striking. It is good training, and you soon get used to it and never suffer from nerves like the people who turn round with a face of thunder if anybody lights a cigarette a quarter of a mile away. I sent some boys ahead to pick up the balls. They were probably about 200 yards in front. Seeing the boys go so far, Fitaurari Mukria asked me why I had sent them there, and when I told him it was to pick up the balls he declared very emphatically that no

one could hit a ball so far. I then teed up the ball, and with silent prayers to Braid, Vardon, and Taylor proceeded to drive. Wonderful to relate, I never drove better and hit six balls in quick succession well over 200 yards.

This performance made a remarkable impression upon the Abyssinians. They felt the balls and looked at the clubs and could not make it out. They themselves play a kind of hockey in which they can hit the ball about thirty or forty yards. How a golf ball could be driven so much farther was a mystery to them.

The Fitaurari now begged me to let him try his prowess. I gave him a faithful cleek, made for me by Braid, which no one, however strong, could break. To a plus-four man at St. Andrews the Fitaurari's costume would not have seemed fashionable. It consisted of baggy trousers, a shirt, and a voluminous cotton shawl worn over the shoulders. In addition, a long curved sword, worn at his right side, stuck out behind him. He grasped the club, not in the orthodox way, but with his left hand below his right. His first shot was a disaster. The club seemed to get mixed up with his sword and flowing shawl, and he missed the ball completely. He then called one of his servants to remove the sword, and again attempted to play, but with no better result. This time he divested himself of the shawl and got down to it in real earnest. He evidently thought it was a mistake to stand, so he took a run and hit with all his might: the ball trickled along the ground a few yards and then stopped. After several more efforts the Fitaurari gave it up, saying that Satan was in the ball—a statement which many better players than he have made before. He thought it would be better to postpone our game to another day, and I agreed.

We were turning to go home when I saw one of his officers coming towards me with a sheepish ex-

pression. Busily engaged with my pupil, I had not observed this man extract my favourite brassy from my bag. I now saw that he held the shaft in one hand and the head in the other, upon which I was firmly of the opinion that it was time to depart. Fitaurari Mukria very kindly offered to have the offender chained up by the hands and feet; but, although I was seriously annoyed, my anger did not go to such lengths.

The Abyssinian type of hockey, which I mentioned a little while ago, is in some ways reminiscent of the games of football which are played once a year in some parts of England from one end of the village to the other. There appear to be no rules, and there are no limits to the field of play. Any number can make up the sides, and it is immaterial whether one side has forty players and the other twenty. The ball is beaten backwards and forwards, and the players are constantly hit by the sticks. The game is played with the greatest keenness, and free fights are common. A few years ago, immediately after a game among the syces at the Legation, one of the losing side went to his hut, seized his rifle, and shot a member of the winning side. Then, throwing down his rifle, he ran away up the hill behind the Legation, pursued by the rest of the native staff. He made good his escape, and a short time afterwards sent a letter to the Legation offering to pay the blood-money and hoping that he would be allowed to come back and take on his old work. He asked for a reply, which was sent. It was in the negative.

But I digress. Reinforcements of 300 men had now reached Mega, and on the day after Mukria's golfing exploits the whole army left for Arero. I was to accompany the Abyssinian army as liaison officer, so I set out later the same afternoon and came up with it before night.

The method of progress of an Abyssinian army is

very different from ours. At a given signal they all start off and make the best way they can to the next camp. The result is that the road is littered with slaves carrying food and *taj* and sick people. However, they seem to arrive at their destination at the end of the day, which is the main thing. The local chiefs who guided us to Arero took a very roundabout route in order to tire the troops as much as possible. They wanted them to return to the north, and hoped to hasten their departure by making things uncomfortable for them. On the 18th June we had a long and waterless march. When we reached the wells, they were already swamped out by a floundering mass of men and mules who had rushed in to get water. There would have been an awkward predicament, if other wells had not been found a few miles away. Next day we reached Arero. Meanwhile, a large number of mules had died of the Sagan River sickness, and malaria was very prevalent among the men. The Abyssinians had neither doctors nor medicines with them, and there was a heavy drain upon my slender store of quinine and other drugs.

On the march to Arero I had many opportunities of talking with Fitaurari Mukria, and formed the opinion that he was the right man for the work we had on hand. An aristocrat by birth, he knows how to command. At the same time he never calls upon his men to go where he will not go himself. Besides being a good soldier, he has the capacity for sizing up a situation correctly and putting his finger upon the significant factors. He told me, for example, what I had pointed out time and again, that Fitaurari Waldi's people were responsible for all the trouble in the south, that they had been in league with the Tigre, and that a clean sweep would have to be made of them. Upon the question of Gaddaduma he was perfectly reasonable, admitting that under the treaty with Menelik we had the right to water

there, and saying that he could not understand why all the people down in the south were making such a fuss about it.

Meanwhile we learnt that the Tigre were becoming thoroughly alarmed by the magnitude of the forces which were assembling against them. An Abyssinian Boran reported that, at a meeting of Tigre held at a place one day north of Gaddaduma, one of the leaders refused to fight on account of the British superiority in machine-guns and ammunition, and left with all his men for the interior. The other leaders, however, decided to try their strength against the Abyssinian army. Soon after our arrival at Arero, Bajirond Warke and Ato Haili decided that discretion was the better part of valour and surrendered with their followings.

On 27th June the Abyssinian operations began with an attack on the Tigre stronghold in the neighbourhood of Karayo, north of Arero. There were casualties on both sides, but the advantage lay decidedly with the Abyssinians. In these encounters, to be wounded is often worse than to be killed outright. The plight of the wounded was deplorable, for there is no medical service in an Abyssinian army, and I had to do the best I could for them with my limited knowledge. It is marvellous that an Abyssinian army is as reliable as it is when one remembers what little consideration the Government gives to the needs of the common soldier. Mukria's soldiers, on the whole, did remarkably well. They would be hard to beat at the kind of fighting they had to do—tracking down and engaging in the bush scattered parties of Tigre. They got away in an incredibly short time, leaving the camp standing and taking only their rifles and ammunition. They had no system of transport and supplies, but simply trusted to finding food and water in the country. Yet they would frequently remain away from their base for three

or four days or even longer and forage for themselves meanwhile.

The difficulties of the campaign can be imagined from an incident that occurred only two days after the fight with the Tigre near Karayo. Five men were drawing water from a well quite close to the camp at Arero, when a band of Tigre suddenly appeared, took all their clothes and three rifles from them, and then escaped into the surrounding forest. A hue and cry was raised, but not a single Tigre was captured.

Mukria was very proud of his shooting and was anxious to have a match with me; so one day, while we were at Arero, we went out together, accompanied by a large Abyssinian following, to try conclusions. We put a mark at about 200 yards, and Mukria decided to shoot first. At once it was evident that the competition was not to be under Bisley conditions, for Mukria carefully planted a stick having a number of prongs into the ground, and proceeded to shoot with his rifle resting on one of these prongs at a suitable height. Under these conditions he certainly shot uncommonly well for an Abyssinian and hit the mark every time. After each shot he extolled himself and his prowess, and his followers were not behindhand in their acclamations. When my turn came, however, I managed—to the unconcealed joy of my cook and orderly who had accompanied me—to place my shots a little nearer to the centre than he had done. I admit I was pleased at the result, for on lying down to fire, I found the grass was so long that I could not see the target. I had therefore to shoot sitting—a position which is not conducive to accurate marksmanship.

For some mysterious reason Abyssinians have the reputation of being good shots; but in my experience Mukria is the only one, with the exception of men who have been trained in the King's African Rifles,

who had the vaguest idea of accurate marksmanship. In general, they are the worst shots imaginable. They have not the least conception of the way to use sights, and even under 100 yards it is only by luck that they hit what they are aiming at. An expert shot could do nothing with their rifles, because they are never cleaned and in consequence are hopelessly inaccurate. Moreover, cartridges are much too valuable to an Abyssinian to be used for shooting practice.

After the shooting match, some of Mukria's men showed me how they attacked in battle. Their usual method is to fire off all their ammunition at the enemy, and then to throw their rifles away and rush in with the cutting sword. I suggested to some of the officers that these massed rushes might be dangerous under modern war-conditions, when machine-guns are used with such deadly effect; but I could see that they were not in the least convinced and still had a firm belief in the efficacy of their own methods.

I mentioned earlier that my old enemy, Kanyazmach Bokala, was among the officers accompanying Fitaurari Mukria. When he saw that I was on friendly terms with his commander, Bokala tried hard to ingratiate himself with me. One day he came to my tent and asked whether I could not reconsider my decision about the shot-gun. When I replied that that was out of the question, he asked whether I could not give him the rifle which I had offered to his father, Fitaurari Waldi, on my first visit to Gardula, and which his father had then refused. I said that it was not our custom to offer presents twice. Bokala pouted his lips and retired visibly discomfited.

While we were at Arero, Fitaurari Mukria obtained possession of some letters written by Bokala to certain of the Tigre leaders, which implicated him with them. The Fitaurari therefore determined to have

him arrested. On 1st July, the army, which had just returned from the fight near Karayo, was gathered together on the top of Arero Mountain. The Fitaurari was surrounded by his troops, while Bokala was also present with a large force of his own and his father's soldiers. Bokala bore himself with his usual arrogant air, quite unconscious of the part he was to play in the ensuing drama. It was a pretty spot, a small open grass plain, with juniper trees all around. The Fitaurari, in the usual Abyssinian manner, began to talk of matters far removed from the subject he had in hand. Suddenly, without the slightest warning, his manner changed. Certain letters, he said, had come into his possession showing that Kan-yazmach Bokala had had relations with the Tigre leaders. Then, quick as lightning, he covered Bokala with his revolver and ordered his immediate arrest. All the Waldi section, infuriated by this insult to their leader, raised their rifles; and their voices, mad with passion, sounded like harsh growls. But all around they saw rifles levelled at them in numbers far exceeding their own. If one of them, bolder than the rest, had fired in defence of Bokala, a bloody combat would have followed. For a few tense seconds the two factions glared at each other. Then the Waldi crowd dropped their rifles; they had met their master. Bokala, meanwhile, was gazing into the muzzle of Mukria's revolver a few feet from him. Some men now came forward with long chains, which they slipped over Bokala's hands and feet. This done, his wrists and ankles were placed in turn on a large stone, while the iron rings were gradually beaten till they fitted exactly. Then, in dead silence, he was led away. Fitaurari Mukria left the meeting after warning all the chiefs that their fate would be the same if they had dealings with the enemy.

To wear these chains must be a terrible punishment. I have heard tell of a powerful chief who,

when a prisoner was recalcitrant and would not carry out his demands, would have the fetters gradually tightened, week by week, till the circulation was stopped and the wretched man's hands and feet withered and dropped off. Revolting as this is, I imagine it would not equal the horrors of the rack, the thumbscrew, and the stake, which were prevalent in 'civilised' Europe not so many years ago.

Some of the old Abyssinian punishments almost equalled in severity the practices which the chronicler records during the reign of our own king Stephen. The following was told me by an eyewitness. A woman had a rich husband, whose property she wished to acquire. One night she murdered him in his sleep, cut up the corpse, and buried it in the hut. She gave out next day that he had gone on a journey, so his absence roused no suspicions. Unfortunately for herself, the woman was addicted to strong drink, and one day not long afterwards she got very drunk and began to babble. The people who heard her put two and two together, searched her hut, and found the remains of the husband's corpse. The woman was taken before Menelik and sentenced to death. This was to be the manner of her death. She was to be taken to the high road, buried up to her neck, and left there till she died. The sentence was duly carried out. A friend of mine who happened to ride past the place saw her there, and heard her calling out to the boys driving loaded donkeys to market 'Please be careful, or your donkeys will kick my head'. Incredible as it may sound, she survived the heat, and the flies, and the attentions of stray dogs, and many another torture, for three whole days, when a large stone was dropped on her head, squashing it as flat as a pancake. The stone was not removed but remained there as a sign.

Flogging has been raised to a diabolical pitch of perfection. It is administered by people who are

specially picked and do nothing else. They do not beat across the buttocks as we do, but lengthways up the back. The person to be operated upon is tied by the hands and feet with long thongs. He is then stretched on the ground and the thongs are held by several people, fore and aft. One executioner stands by the head, facing the feet, and the other stands on the opposite side by the feet, facing the head. Strokes with a hide whip or *sjambok* are then given alternately along the back on each side of the backbone. The punishment is so severe that criminals often succumb to it.

Again, the penalty for habitual thieves is very barbarous. The hand is cut off at the wrist and the stump immersed in boiling fat to stop the bleeding. I have been told—with what truth I do not know—that the people who perform the operation will do it skilfully and quickly with a sharp knife or slowly and clumsily with a blunt knife, according to whether the condemned man's relatives make it worth their while or not. One knows that Ras Tafari, the Heir-Apparent, dislikes these cruel punishments, and one hopes that the day is not far distant when he will be able to substitute more humane methods of vindicating justice.

But I am digressing once more. To return to the arrest of Bokala, I visited Fitaurari Mukria in his tent that night, and found him surrounded by a veritable arsenal of weapons, elephant-gun and shot-gun included. He was evidently a little anxious lest the Waldi faction should retaliate. I had made quite an institution of my evening chats with Fitaurari Mukria, and used to sit up night after night in his tent, drinking *taj* to the ruin of my digestion while we talked. We became great friends. Before saying good night, we used to toast each other. He would say 'I drink to you, General'—not that I have the faintest chance of ever becoming one—,

and I would reply by drinking to his Dajazmachship, which is the next rank above a Fitaurari.

On 2nd July, the day after Bokala's arrest, Fitaurari Mukria held a review of the troops who had taken part in the engagement near Karayo. I went with him and his officers to an open place by the camp, where we all sat down on an ant-heap, with soldiers extended in two long lines on each side. Before the troops arrived on the scene, we heard them in the distance firing off rifles and singing. Then they came in a body, shrieking out in a frenzy the wonderful deeds they had done. Those who had particularly distinguished themselves came singly, dancing with little mincing steps. After yelling out the part they had played, they would rush up to Mukria, and, mad with excitement, fire off their rifles, prostrate themselves before him, and kiss his feet. I thought the rifle-firing a very dangerous item of the program, for they did not seem to care much in which direction their weapons were pointing, and from the look in Mukria's eye I imagine he entirely agreed with me. Presently the prisoners were brought forward in chains and shewn to us. They were a villainous-looking crowd altogether; their clothes which had originally been white were so black that if they had been soaked in ink they could hardly have been much blacker. The shouting and singing continued till it became wearisome, and I was glad when the performance came to an end.

As a result of the fight with Mukria's troops and of an engagement with a British detachment near Derkali in which they lost three important men, the Tigre were now thoroughly disheartened. Most of them returned to the north, and all that was left for the joint expedition to do was to try and disperse the small bands scattered about the border. Fitaurari Mukria planned to leave Arero for Wujilli and the Daua River on 4th July, but the troops refused

to go. They had been influenced by the local soldiery, who had missed no opportunity of telling them that the Daua was a hot-bed of malaria and mule sickness. In the end, this had the effect of scaring the army. The Fitaurari held a meeting and made it plain that disobedience to his orders would be visited with condign punishment. Thus admonished, the army set out next day.

As we were going down the hill from Arero, I heard 'clank clank' behind me, and looking round saw the wretched Bokala staggering along under his chains in charge of armed guards. No longer was he riding a gaily caparisoned mule; gone was his insolent and self-satisfied expression. He came up to me and kissed my feet, imploring me to help him. I could not help feeling sorry for him, but the matter was now out of my hands. He was eventually taken up to Addis Ababa and imprisoned. After spending a long time in chains, he was told by Fitaurari Hapta Georgis, the Minister for War, to go to Fitaurari Mukria and ask him to intercede for him with the Empress. Bokala was always a fool, and a fool he will remain to the end of his days. He spoilt his own case and infuriated Mukria by addressing him in the singular, a form only used in speaking to inferiors and servants. He was sent empty away and spent many more months in chains. Nothing could teach this man wisdom.

When we reached Walena, Mukria received information that there were no Tigre in the direction of the Daua River. He therefore changed his mind and went straight to Moyale. It had been our intention to go by way of Gaddaduma, but the troops flatly refused. They said that they were tired out and wanted to return home, and that their flour was finished and they had nothing to eat. They did not see why they, as Government troops, should keep the Boran province in order, and objected to

getting all the kicks while Hapta Georgis and his officers took all the halfpence. Mukria, of course, could not openly admit that his men refused to obey his orders, and he got out of the difficulty by announcing that there were very few Tigre in that part of the world and it would be better to leave the British to deal with them and so avoid the danger of their mistaking his men for Tigre. This was a very real danger, by the way, for an Abyssinian soldier wears no uniform and as often as not is indistinguishable in appearance from a brigand. Indeed, a little later on, a party of Gerazmach Woyessa's and another of Gerazmach Gashi's men, meeting in thick bush, mistook each other for Tigre and exchanged shots for some time (without any casualties) before discovering their error.

In view of the Abyssinians' inability to clear up the eastern part of Boran, it was unfortunate that the British troops had been ordered not to cross the border beyond the line of wells. Admittedly the Abyssinians had received no reinforcements, but even if they had I doubt very much whether they would have reached the Daua River. My impression from this campaign was that they had no staying power. After a couple of months in the field, their troops become homesick. They were terrified of fever, and imagined that the eastern part of Boran was a hot-bed of sickness. One of Mukria's most important officers, who had a mild attack of malaria at Moyale, behaved like a child of six, said he was going to die, and insisted on returning home at once so that he could be buried in consecrated ground. When an officer sets an example like this, one can imagine the effect upon the morale of the common soldier. To add to everything, the troops are wretchedly paid, and their commissariat arrangements, when the month's supply of flour which each man brings with him is exhausted, are disgraceful.

The Abyssinian army reached Jamok on 15th July, and next day Fitaurari Mukria paid his official visit to the British *boma* at Moyale. Mukria had received many warnings not to go to Moyale, because the British intended to take him prisoner; and many of his men were still under that impression when our party started from camp for Moyale. Kittermaster and Dickinson staged a very fine welcome for him, with buglers blowing lustily and a smart guard of honour of King's African Rifles and constabulary.

While the other British officers entertained the Abyssinians in a marquee, Mukria, Kittermaster, and I withdrew to Kittermaster's house and had a long private conversation. I acted as interpreter, and in the absence of outsiders Mukria discussed political affairs with the utmost candour. He displayed moderation and common sense, and promised to do his best to improve matters in the future. On the surface the conversation could not have been more satisfactory; it only remained to see how far Mukria was genuine, and how far his goodwill, if genuine, would carry.

After lunch the Abyssinians were shewn the men of the K.A.R. at drill, and as they had never before seen trained troops they were much impressed. We had arranged to fire off a Lewis gun in order to shew Mukria how it worked, but he asked me not to do this in case his men, hearing the firing, should think he was being attacked and rush the *boma*. This was another sidelight on the local propaganda asserting the British intention to take the Boran province. Most Abyssinians would have accepted such reports long ago, but Mukria was a man of intelligence and refused to believe such nonsense. After an exchange of presents the Abyssinians and myself returned to Jamok.

Among the presents were twenty bullocks, which Mukria was very glad to have as his army was short

of meat. Soon after this gift had been delivered, I was sitting writing in my tent when I heard shouts and yells, and on going outside to investigate the cause of the disturbance saw crowds of men tearing after the terrified bullocks and striking at them right and left with their long curved swords. The wretched beasts were rushing about the camp into and through the tents, frantic with terror. This horrible performance continued till every single bullock had been hamstrung. Then they were dragged, still alive, to different parts of the camp and slaughtered. I told Mukria afterwards that I thought it a most repulsive proceeding, and he agreed with me, or at least said he did. He gave as an excuse that the animals were on the open road and could not have been caught without hamstringing them, while if the men had tried to shoot them they would probably have shot each other.

From the time of their arrival from Gamo, Mukria's troops had been half starved. There were bullocks and milk in plenty in Boran, but the local Abyssinians did nothing but make excuses for not supplying the army. In fact, it seemed as if orders had gone forth that the army was to make its own arrangements for supplies and not live on the country. Towards the end of July, the food question became so acute that even the slaves refused to work. The soldiers held a meeting, at which they said they were starving and must return home at once. If Fitaurari Mukria declined to go, they declared they would leave without him, so he had no alternative but to accede to their request. Thus, on 31st July, the Abyssinian army left Mega to return to Gamo, and the first phase of the joint expedition came to an end.

On the morning they left, I went down early to wish Mukria good-bye. He and I had become real friends and I was truly sorry that he was going away. I found him in his small tent, the big one having

already been taken down and sent on in advance to the place where he was going to camp that night. He seemed to be in a bad humour. Like most people, Mukria was not at his best at an early hour. We were chatting together in his tent when an altercation took place outside among the men. In a few minutes an officer came in and said that one of the slaves had refused to load a mule. Thereupon a certain officer of higher rank suddenly lost his temper. He left the tent and gave orders that the offending slave was to be tied up. No sooner was he outside the tent than the sight of the slave so infuriated him that he seized a wooden peg which was lying about and began to beat him upon the toes with it. Tiring of this, he gave him several blows on the top of the head, drawing blood profusely. I really believe he would have killed the man if Gerazmach Gashi had not rushed in and intervened. The officer told me afterwards that when he got home he would have the slave severely punished, but I feel sure that when his temper subsided better counsels prevailed. However, I expect that the slave got a thorough thrashing before the day was ended. The behaviour of the officer responsible on this occasion surprised me greatly, for hitherto he had been all courtesy and kindness in his dealings with me. It only shews how close the savage lies to the top under the veneer of politeness: whether our skins are white, black, or yellow, we are but little removed from Neolithic man.

CHAPTER XIII

EVACUATION OF GADDADUMA

Further Tigre activities—native resistance—defeat and surrender of robber chiefs—Abyssinian refugees in British territory—misunderstandings about Gaddaduma—evacuation decided upon—British troops withdraw.

DURING August, 1919, after the departure of Fitaurari Mukria and his army, I made a journey from Mega into the west of the Boran province as far as Kuncharo Mountain, a fairly high eminence of volcanic origin with an excellent spring of water nearly at the summit. On the outward journey I kept to the south of the escarpment and returned on the northern side. During the trip I only met two small robber bands. The explanation of the scarcity of Tigre, however, was that they had returned to their old haunts in the east. On reaching Mega again, I soon learnt that they had resumed the round of robbery and outrage.

The hands of the officer commanding the British troops on the frontier were tied by orders from Nairobi to confine his activities to patrolling the border and preventing Tigre from escaping into British territory. Beyond this, he had Fitaurari Mukria's permission to follow into Abyssinian territory any Tigre who were discovered on the British side. But he had no authority whatever to cross the border and hunt Tigre on the Abyssinian side. The defensive tactics thus imposed on our troops rendered them practically useless, for it left all initiative to the Tigre, who could camp in the bush one

or two days' journey from the frontier and from there pounce down at will on the natives in British territory. Since Mukria's departure, none of the Abyssinian officers had had the pluck to attempt to suppress the Tigre and restore order in Boran.

I have mentioned earlier in this book that the Boran, the Gurre, and other natives of this country had entirely lost any spirit they may have had, and submitted to robbery and outrage without any attempt to defend themselves. However, even the worm will turn, and in September, with much persuasion, the officers at Moyale induced the local natives to gather a party of riflemen to go hunting Tigre. As it happened, their first venture was a success. A party of five Ajuran and one Boran ambushed about a dozen Tigre, and claimed to have killed four and wounded one with the loss of one man killed. Later, and perhaps more disinterested, reports put the Tigre casualties at one severely wounded and one missing. Whatever the facts were, the incident was useful as a demonstration to the natives that they themselves could tackle the Tigre when they made up their minds to do it.

Other events which happened about the same time had the effect of shaking the power of the Tigre. In the first place, one of their leaders, named Zodi, decided to take advantage of the Government's offer of pardon and returned to Shoa with a following of some fifty rifles. In the second place, Fitaurari Tugla, by far the most notorious of the Tigre chiefs, was killed.

This latter success was not due to Gashi or Woyessa, whose attitude, indeed, was one of the most masterly inactivity. They and their officers kept on saying that they wanted to go and fight the Tigre, but their men would not obey them; while the men said that they wanted to fight but their officers would not lead them. As a matter of fact, it was six of one and

half a dozen of the other. None of them was interested in anything but saving his skin. There was one exception—Kanyazmach Waldi Gabriel and his men. Waldi Gabriel had a personal grievance against the Tigre, for they had captured and burnt his town, Arero. In the middle of September, Fitaaurari Tugla and his band went to Walena and demanded a thousand dollars from the Boran. He was there attacked by Waldi Gabriel's soldiers, who succeeded in killing Tugla and three of his companions, besides wounding two others, at a cost of two killed and five wounded. The troops who carried out this stroke were themselves former Tigre who had gone up to Addis Ababa and made peace before Fitaaurari Mukria was sent to the south—a good instance of the efficacy of setting a thief to catch a thief!

The surrender of Zodi and the death of Tugla implied the break-up of the Tigre as a well-organised force. Since the opening of the campaign they had lost a good many killed and wounded in sporadic engagements. But, to my mind, what had undermined their morale more than anything was the action of our troops and police in following them into their own country and giving them much-needed lessons there. For the Tigre, this was an unpleasant change from the old days when they could go into British territory, commit their outrages, and then return across the border and metaphorically laugh up their sleeves at our impotence. Considerable numbers shewed an inclination to follow Zodi's example and entered into negotiations for an amnesty.

The surrendering business became little better than a farce. Men went out and joined the bandits, looted and murdered, and, when they had made enough money, or when they were tired of the discomforts of life in the bush, or when they were sufficiently frightened, they came in and surrendered. What happened to them then? Were they punished,

or made to disgorge their ill-gotten gains, or required to leave the country? Not a bit of it; they usually enrolled in the service of one of the local chiefs, and were looked upon as Government soldiers. This state of affairs simply put a premium on all crime, and I had to tell Gashi flatly that I would have nothing to do with any peace overtures until full reparation was made.

Now that the main operations were over and the Tigre had been at any rate scotched, two important questions relating to the border came to the fore: the question of the Boran tenants and the question of Gaddaduma.

When the power of the Tigre was at its height, considerable numbers of Abyssinian Boran, it will be remembered, sought safety and protection with their flocks and herds in British territory. At the meeting in Addis Ababa when the joint expedition was arranged, the British Minister undertook that, after the operations, when order was restored, these Boran should be returned. I was strongly of the opinion that they should be sent back as soon as practicable. If they remained on British territory, they would form a standing temptation to the Abyssinians to try to get them back, with the inevitable result that one day an 'incident' would occur which would compel the British authorities either to take stronger action than they had ever done before or to confess their powerlessness to protect people in their territory. Again, the influx of Boran into the Northern Frontier District had caused great congestion at the wells, and the supply of water did not suffice to meet the demands made upon it. Consequently, once Gaddaduma and the border wells were evacuated by the British, it was only a question of time before the majority of Abyssinian Boran now in British territory would be forced to cross the frontier to water their stock, whereupon they would at once



ZODI, THE BRIGAND LEADER.



GADDADUMA.



be seized by the Abyssinian soldiery. Nor was there much reason to anticipate that these Boran would decline to return to Abyssinia. Like all primitive peoples, they love their old haunts best, and would flock back once the Tigre were out of the way. The fact that they had lost a lot of cattle from sickness in British territory would make them all the more anxious to return. Even in the unlikely event of their not wanting to go back, there was no alternative, in view of the Minister's undertaking to the Abyssinian Government, but to order them to do so.

The considerations which I have just advanced will, I imagine, appear conclusive. But it cost me much patience and persistence to drive them home to the local Abyssinians, nearly all of whom were thoroughly convinced (by gossip and rumour) that the British intended to deprive them permanently of these tenants. Time and again, I assured them that the Minister's undertaking would be kept, and that, as soon as the rains fell and the road from Marsabit was open, their Boran would be returned, *provided that the Abyssinian Government was in control of the province and could afford them adequate protection*. I pointed out that nothing could be done before, first because shortage of water prevented them from moving, and secondly because the country had only just been freed from the Tigre. They realised this at last, and promised in the meantime to refrain from interference with the natives on the border.

Still more important and intricate was the question of Gaddaduma. In a previous chapter, I have described how the occupation of Gaddaduma by British forces for the duration of the joint expedition was arranged (and, as we understood, agreed to by the Abyssinian Government), how the oral message brought down from Addis Ababa by Lij Wandim Aganyu excluded occupation, and how, on the ground that

this message did not bear out our interpretation of the agreement with the Abyssinian Government, the occupation was effected in April, 1919.

In the meantime, upon receiving a report of the tenor of Lij Wandim Aganyu's message, the Legation took up the question with the Abyssinian Government, which emphatically repudiated any suggestion of an agreement for the occupation of Gaddaduma and other wells in Abyssinian territory. Moreover, when questioned, the Legation interpreter denied that occupation had been sanctioned at the famous interview. The Abyssinians, he said, had agreed that we might 'go and stay and take water at any wells that would be useful'. The Amharic word which he had translated 'stay' conveyed the idea of a short rest of a few hours or a day, but not longer; there is a totally different word for 'occupy', and this word had not been used. There had evidently been a genuine misunderstanding, and the only thing to be done now was to persuade the Abyssinian Government that the occupation of Gaddaduma was essential to the success of the joint expedition. Meanwhile, on 27th May, the *Chargé d'Affaires* at Addis Ababa telegraphed to Nairobi his opinion that forcible occupation would intensify the suspicions and even hostility with which the Abyssinians regarded our actions. But Gaddaduma had already been occupied on 25th April! This news reached the capital towards the middle of June, when negotiations were still proceeding with the Government for permission to occupy it.

The *Chargé d'Affaires* at once sought an interview with Ras Tafari and Fitaurari Hapta Georgis to acquaint them with the step which had been taken in perfect good faith on the basis of the language they had used to the Minister and myself in the previous February. Ras Tafari and the Fitaurari accepted the accomplished fact calmly, but asked for

a letter in order that the Abyssinian Government might give a considered reply.

Gaddaduma once occupied, the question arose whether it should be evacuated, and if so, when.

The opinion of the British officials most closely affected, namely, those in charge of the administration of the Northern Frontier District, was very definite. They desired above everything to retain possession of Gaddaduma (and the neighbouring wells at Godoma) upon whatever terms could be arranged with the Abyssinian Government—by purchase, by leasing, by rectification of the frontier line, as compensation for past outrages,¹ or in the last resort, if they were allowed, by force of arms. If actual ownership were not possible, the least they would be content with was the right to keep a strong post of observation there with freedom of access both from the Gurre side and from Moyale.

They had a very strong case. By treaty with Menelik, the natives were entitled to the use of water and grazing on either side of the frontier without let or hindrance. For years past, this obligation had been flouted by the Abyssinians, who had persisted in robbing and outraging natives from British territory who went to the wells to water their stock. Diplomatic protests had proved of no avail to ensure just fulfilment of treaty rights, and experience had taught, times without number, that no reliance whatever could be placed upon Abyssinian promises. The importance of the wells at Gaddaduma and Godoma to the natives on the British side and their comparatively negligible value to the Abyssinians have been touched upon more than once in the preceding chapters. These facts had been admitted by a broad-minded man like Fitaurari Mukria, and were

¹ The list of outrages during the past six years for which no satisfaction had been obtained ran into well over one hundred items.

completely confirmed by statistics which were collected during the occupation.

Gaddaduma and Godoma were in no sense villages. They boasted only two or three dilapidated grass huts which the Abyssinian garrison used periodically. There were no other huts, no traders, no permanent Abyssinian settlement. The Abyssinians never retained a post at either place during the rains. As Kittermaster remarked, their sole object in putting in a garrison, usually from six to ten men, in the dry season was to tax the natives (mostly illegally) who watered there, and to organise expeditions (entirely illegally) into British territory.

Unfortunately, a political question can never be settled on its merits, and the question of Gaddaduma was no exception. The Foreign Office, asked for instructions immediately after the occupation, consulted the Colonial Office, and after some delay the *Chargé d'Affaires* at Addis Ababa was instructed to demand the Abyssinian Government's strict adherence to the agreement made in the previous February, while repeating the assurance that the occupation was a temporary measure designed to facilitate Anglo-Abyssinian co-operation against the Tigre and that the British forces would withdraw immediately order was restored.

This decision, much as it was regretted by everyone who knew the insults and humiliations heaped upon the officials of the Northern Frontier District, was practically inevitable when all the circumstances were taken into consideration. A promise had been given that the occupation would be temporary, and, as the *Chargé d'Affaires* pointed out, 'we have a reputation to live up to and we cannot repudiate pledges merely because the Abyssinians do not fulfil their engagements'. Moreover, in those days, most people imagined that the statesmen assembled in Paris were really going to settle all outstanding

problems the world over, in which case, since the whole future of Abyssinia might come up at any moment for decision, it was clearly desirable not to embark upon separate negotiations with the Abyssinian Government upon a particular point. On the other hand, if the pledge of evacuation were kept, the British representatives could enter a discussion of the future of Abyssinia with a clear conscience, and the Abyssinians would not have a single legitimate grievance with which to cloud the issues or solicit the sympathies of other Powers.

When Fitaurari Mukria left Boran with his army, he reported to the central Government that the joint operations were at an end, but the British Chargé d'Affaires rightly refused to accept this view while a large part of the province had not been cleared of robber-bands and no reliable officers and troops had been sent down to maintain order. It would have been possible, of course, to play for time, and spin out the occupation of Gaddaduma for some months on one pretext and another. But that the Abyssinians would knuckle under to our permanent possession of the place could not be expected by anyone who knew how jealously they looked upon all their neighbours, and how sensitive they were to any injury to their *amour-propre*. Every Abyssinian in the south was strongly anti-British, and no opportunity to fan this hatred was ever thrown away. This attitude was partly to be accounted for by a prophecy to the effect that Abyssinia would eventually be conquered from the south. For some time, I was able to satisfy the local chiefs by explaining that we could not leave Gaddaduma at present, because there were no Government troops in the eastern parts of Boran, and because we had not yet received official letters from Addis Ababa that the campaign was finished.

Towards the end of September, however, the issue could no longer be shirked. The power of the Tigre

had been broken and news was received of the approach of an army of occupation under Kanyazmach Kidani. There were three alternatives: to remain at Gaddaduma with Abyssinian sanction; to hold it by force of arms; to evacuate it with as good grace as possible. The decision to evacuate had already been taken. All that remained, therefore, was to arrange the time and manner.

Accordingly, on 2nd October, I took the responsibility of officially notifying the acting officer in charge of the Northern Frontier District that the campaign was at an end and of requesting him to give instructions for the evacuation of Gaddaduma. The moment could hardly have been more opportune, for with the break of the rains the natives were, as usual, leaving the border wells entirely unoccupied. The evacuation was delayed for a few days by a slight recrudescence of Tigre activities, and was not actually completed till 17th October.

CHAPTER XIV

FRONTIER EPISODES

Woyessa in charge of Boran—Kanyzmach Kidani's strange behaviour—his fight with Tigre in Liban—his apology—a lull on the border—I return to Gardula.

EARLY in October, 1919, after arranging for the evacuation of Gaddaduma, I went back to Mega, where I learnt that letters had been received from Fitaaurari Hapta Georgis putting Gerazmach Woyessa in charge of Boran in place of Gerazmach Gashi. Woyessa was certainly a stronger man than Gashi, but he was much more prejudiced against all foreigners. Nevertheless, he had always been friendly towards me. He had been instrumental, in the face of strenuous opposition, in building the Consulate at Gardula, and he had also given evidence on my behalf when Kanyzmach Bokala was charged at Addis Ababa in connection with his disgraceful behaviour to me when I first arrived in Boran in 1915.

New brooms sweep clean, and, after taking over the reins of office, Gerazmach Woyessa diligently tried to find out all the people in Mega who had been in league with the Tigre or had sold them rifles, cartridges, and other supplies. To this end, the whole population was required, under severe penalties for non-compliance, to assemble every morning on the top of the mountain. There they remained, all day and every day, in the rain and the cold, till the culprits were discovered. Under these disagreeable conditions, it was not long before people began to tell

tales about each other, and in a short time a number of the guilty ones were caught and put in chains.

Meanwhile, Kanyazmach Kidani, with a following of about 600 rifles, arrived at Yaabello, only two days' journey from Mega, and I heard that he was intending—probably in accordance with explicit instructions from Fitaurari Hapta Georgis—to go straight to Gaddaduma. I had already pointed out to Woyessa and Gashi how important it was that I should accompany the Abyssinian army (in the capacity of liaison officer) in case they wished to go to Gaddaduma, or in case matters arose which affected the two Governments. Much to my surprise, however, although he entered into communication with the chiefs at Mega and told them to join him at Yaabello, Kidani ignored my existence entirely and sent me no message, either written or oral. According to Abyssinian usage, such conduct was extremely rude, if indeed it did not amount to an actual insult. However, on Sunday, 19th October, Gerazmach Woyessa called on me and we had a friendly chat, as a result of which I agreed to leave with him and the rest of the chiefs on the following day to go and see Kidani.

On the Monday morning, I had just sent some of my things over to Gerazmach Gashi's house, as he had kindly given me permission to store them there during my absence, when a messenger arrived from Woyessa asking me not to leave Mega till he sent me a letter. I asked the messenger the reason, and he replied that his master had just received a letter from Kidani, but that he did not know the contents. Accordingly, being quite unsuspecting, and imagining that for one reason or another our departure had been delayed for a day or two, I sent my camels back to the foot of the mountain. I went out in the afternoon for a round of golf, and on my return one of my servants, who had just been to Gashi's house, told me that all the chiefs had left Mega as

previously arranged and were now camped at the foot of the mountain. Gashi, he added, had told him to tell me that he hoped the British troops had left Gaddaduma by this time, because he believed Kidani meant to attack them.

I now realised that Woyessa's message had been a subterfuge to detain me at Mega, and the possibilities of the situation began to cause me anxiety. From such information as I could gather, it appeared that Kidani was making for Gaddaduma; and in the light of his rude behaviour, he could hardly be going there with friendly intentions, for otherwise he would have sent me a letter of greetings or a message of some sort. My best course, I decided, was to find Kidani and demand an explanation from him. After dark, therefore, I sent down reliable men to bring up the camels, and left Mega very early the next morning by a roundabout route. One of my men overheard an interesting conversation as he passed the Abyssinian camp at night. The Abyssinians were talking about the letter Woyessa had received from Kidani that morning, and said that it contained orders that I was not to be allowed to join the army, and that Kidani refused to come to Mega because I was there.

Some discussion of the probable reasons for this strange behaviour will give an idea of the kind of atmosphere in which I lived in Southern Abyssinia for so many years. Both by nature and by upbringing, the Abyssinian is an extremely suspicious person, especially in anything which concerns foreigners. In the South, this suspicion had been directed against us from the first moment when the two empires acquired a contiguous frontier. Distorted accounts of recent events and the most wildly absurd rumours about our evil intentions had transformed this suspicion into passionate hatred. The whole country was seething with anti-British sentiments.

Fitaurari Mukria, it was said, was sent down really to attack us, but was won over to our side, for which he was disgraced. Kidani had been sent to do the work which Mukria had left undone; he was going to capture all our country as far as the Uaso River, and then they would be able to go and hunt elephant and rhinoceros at Saku (Marsabit). Again, the local Abyssinians longed to revenge the episode at Moyale at the beginning of the year when a machine-gun had been turned on a marauding party of Gashi's and Woyessa's men, although it was entirely their own fault. They contended that we had stolen their tenants, although I had explained the whole position to Woyessa and Gashi *ad nauseam*.

If such tales were current in Boran, they would certainly be exaggerated out of all recognition by the time they reached Addis Ababa; and if, in consequence, Kidani had secret orders from Fitaurari Hapta Georgis to recover his tenants at all costs and to turn us out of Gaddaduma if we were still there, then serious trouble was probably brewing. Moreover, it was not impossible that, even without such orders, Kidani would commit some act of folly. He was formerly the Fitaurari's *agafāri* or butler, he would doubtless be keen to justify his promotion by a display of action, and his head might easily be turned by the position of authority he now held. He had already shown that he was not afraid of consequences by arresting Fitaurari Waldi at Gardula. That his attitude was not determined by personal dislike of me was certain, for he and I had never met. Our disappointment was all the greater because we had naturally concluded that Kidani had been sent down to garrison the country and finish the good work which the joint expedition had begun. We were entitled to expect, as Fitaurari Hapta Georgis had promised, that an experienced and competent official, more or less friendly (or at any rate not actively

hostile) to us, would be sent down. Instead of this, we found we had to do with a newly-promoted minor official who seemed bent on mischief.

Shortly after leaving Mega on the morning of the 20th October, I received messages from Woyessa and Gashi, who had camped the previous night at the foot of the mountain, to say that, instead of going to meet Kidani, they were going westward to Kuncharo Mountain, as there were robbers there. It did not take me long to find out that this was a lie, and that they had gone in exactly the opposite direction, towards Moyale. This fresh piece of deceit convinced me that some kind of plot was afoot. I sent an urgent message to Moyale warning the officials there to be on their guard, and, changing my plans and taking an unfrequented route, proceeded there myself to discuss the situation. On the way, I was not much cheered by news that a large number of soldiers had arrived from Gardula and joined Kidani. The local report said that he now had 2,000 men, which probably meant at the outside between 800 and 1,000. But what could he want with all these men when two or three hundred would have sufficed to suppress such Tigre as remained and keep order in the province?

Some distance from Moyale I left my caravan to follow on next day and rode on ahead in the night. We passed one large camp of Abyssinians and had to make a detour in the bush to avoid their sentries, who were singing noisily and occasionally shouting out to one another, as is their custom. How well I know all those roads between Mega and Moyale! Every turning, every gully, every piece of bush is indelibly printed on my brain. When you spend most of your life entirely cut off from fellow-beings of your own tongue or race, you always tend to make everything you do part of a game of make-believe, such as children play. It seems to be nature's form of self-protection against the psychological evil of

utter solitude, the absence of any channel of expression for the social and gregarious instincts of man. I remember some of the names I had for certain parts of the main road—'The Ladies' Mile', 'Hell-Fire Gully', 'Good Hope Corner'. Again, when one is riding in to Moyale—to see English faces and hear English voices—, there are certain spots where it is permissible to dismount and others where it isn't, and one must not look at one's watch before passing a certain tree. All very childish no doubt, but it gives you something to think about and lessens the boredom of riding hour after hour on a horse or mule at a slow pace over ground which is too well known to be of any interest. We made good going that night and arrived at Moyale about three o'clock in the morning. And there, outside the *boma*, we had to sit until dawn, for I did not know the pass-word and without it nothing would have induced me to go near the Moyale sentries and risk getting a bullet through me for my pains.

After discussing the disposition of the troops and other details with the officials at Moyale, I returned to Mega, partly because I was more likely to pick up useful information there, and partly because I did not care to let the Abyssinians imagine that I had run away for protection. It now appeared that, after he had been joined by Woyessa and Gashi, Kidani thought better of making straight for Gaddaduma, and went instead to Arero. The most conflicting reports of his intentions were in circulation, and it seemed hopeless to try to ferret out the truth. I therefore wrote to the Chargé d'Affaires at Addis Ababa requesting him to inform Fitaurari Hapta Georgis that I demanded an apology from Kanyazmach Kidani for his conduct to me, and furthermore that we could only put the worst construction on the secrecy and suspicious character of this officer's movements, which had compelled us to prepare

for any eventuality. The Fitaurari knew well enough that there was always tension on this border, and he could hardly deny that, if Kidani had no bad intentions, his actions were nothing short of lunatic.

Two days afterwards, a despatch arrived from Moyale stating that Kidani had sent word to the Tigre collected in Liban, offering them the choice of pardon if they surrendered or annihilation if they refused. Kidani, I was informed, 'apparently reiterates his determination to avoid any meeting with you, as your persuasive methods have in the past caused considerable dislocation in the Abyssinian plans'. This, I suppose, is the best compliment I have ever had from an Abyssinian! After the lapse of a few days, news reached Mega that the Tigre had attacked Kidani in Liban at Gara Gafarsa. By piecing together various accounts, I gathered that the Tigre ambushed the army on the line of march and then retired to a hill where fighting went on all day. At night, they returned and attacked Kidani's camp, when a panic occurred and the Government troops, firing on each other in mistake for the enemy, suffered many casualties.

The following week came a budget of letters for me from various Abyssinian chiefs, and among them one from Kidani, who at length deigned to take notice of my existence. His letter was tantamount to an apology for his extraordinary behaviour. He wrote :

From Kanyazmach Kidani :

Let it reach the honourable the English Government Consul, Captain Arnold Hodson.

How are you ? Thank God, I am well. The reason why I did not write to you before was because I was in a hurry to go to Liban. Therefore I did not mean to insult your Government and yourself.

Through the prayers of our master and by the will

of God we fought against Lij Waldi Michael.¹ He was wounded twice and he has been defeated with all his army, and they have left Liban.

I am just going to Mega. We will see each other there.

LIBAN, 13th November, 1919.

(Seal of Kanyazmach Kidani)

I was much relieved to have Kidani's letter, which, from its tone, seemed to offer a fair chance of an amicable settlement of all outstanding matters. I at once sent him my reply :

From the English Government Consul, Captain Arnold Hodson :

Let it reach the Honourable Kanyazmach Kidani.
How are you ? Thank God, I am well.

I have received your honoured letter from Liban. I am glad you did not intend to insult my Government by not writing or coming to see me. As you know, our two Governments agreed to work together in connection with the Tigre. I was to accompany your soldiers. You came down here with a large army. You did not write, and when I wrote to the chiefs and said I was coming to see you, you sent back a letter to Mega that I was not to do so. Was I a fool, therefore, when I said in my heart that you had come down to be my enemy and not my friend ? If you had been in my place, would you not have thought the same ? Now I am glad you have written, and we will talk over everything when we meet.

It is good news you have conquered the Tigre in Liban.

I send you my congratulations.

20th November, 1919.

(Seal)

¹ This man was the chief of the Tigre in Liban.

Kidani, however, did not put in an appearance at Mega, although he sent messengers there for food and transport. He had defeated the Tigre, it is true, but his forces had been badly mauled in the process, and had no stomach for any more fighting. They had many wounded, little ammunition, and no food. As invariably happens with an Abyssinian army, after a couple of months in the field they had shot their bolt, and wanted to go home. I had no intention of running after Kidani again, so, during November, as the border was comparatively quiet for the moment, I made a journey to Gamud Mountain, the highest peak on the escarpment, which lies to the west of Mega. I found a number of small deserted villages scattered about the slopes of the mountain; the inhabitants had all fled in fear of the Tigre. The mountain is well watered, and I noted some excellent sites for camping purposes. From Gamud I went to Moyale for a talk with Plowman, and after staying there a few days I returned to Mega.

Since the beginning of the operations against the Tigre, I had not been able to visit my headquarters at Gardula, and I was now running short of stores and money. As the lull on the border continued, I decided to take advantage of the opportunity to pay a visit to my Consulate. I left Mega on 8th December and arrived at Gardula ten days later. *En route*, I heard that the robbers who infested the Saba flats, through which the main road to Gardula passes, had had an unpleasant surprise when they tried their methods on the Konso natives. They sent three scouts to Konso, which is close to the Sagan River. These men treated the Konso people as though they were Boran, and demanded a bullock. The Konso invited them into a house and said they would send for one. Then, suddenly, they attacked the robbers, killing two and wounding the third.

They tied up the wounded man, who foolishly began threatening to bring back the rest of the band and wipe out the whole village, whereupon the Konso stuck a spear into him and gave him his quietus. If only the Boran had had the pluck to act like this, there would have been very few Tigre in their country.

On 24th December, Lij Indala, who had arrived from Shoa a few days before, paid me a visit and told me that he was going down with 400 men to garrison Boran in the place of Kidani, who had been recalled to the capital. Indala added that he had instructions to build a town in Liban and keep a garrison there. Indala gave me the impression that he wished to be friendly, but he had an evil face and in addition seemed very young for a post of responsibility. Fitaurari Hapta Georgis had still not learned that his province of Boran could only be kept in order if he employed really reliable subordinates.

CHAPTER XV

MEGA AT LAST

Journey to Addis Ababa—an Abyssinian village—negotiations for building Consulate at Mega—fifth journey south—bandits again—removal to Mega—the flagstaff—Alamu steals my mail—he raids native village of Moyale—plans to suppress him—he surrenders and is received with honour—I protest.

I HAD not been long at Gardula when I received instructions to go up to Addis Ababa. I left my Consulate on 29th December, 1919, and travelled down to the shores of Lake Chamo and thence to Lake Margherita. From there it is a long and steep climb to the picturesque village of Dorzi, which lies tucked away snugly in a fold of the hills. Just below the village there is a beautiful grassy amphitheatre, where on this occasion I camped. There happened to be a market in the vicinity that day, and my arrival was quickly noised abroad. Almost before the camp was pitched, all the surrounding slopes were occupied by hundreds of people, who had evidently come to see what a white man looked like. These people were quite orderly, but kept up a constant chatter. Now, in accordance with my custom when on trek, I had brought up with me from Boran several goats and sheep. Whether the difference of climate—the sudden change from the lowlands to the highlands of Gamo—affected them I cannot say, but suddenly first one and then another ran up the steep bank behind my tent and then, before getting to the top, began to turn somersaults and roll over and over to the bottom. The crowd seemed to

think that this was a special performance staged for their amusement, and howled with joy. I must admit that it was one of the strangest sights I have seen in my life. The animals looked exactly as if they had gone mad. Probably they were suffering from some kind of fit, for they all died that night.

Near here I passed processions of women carrying up grass from the lowlands; they managed to carry a prodigious amount on their backs up these mountain paths, but they seemed thoroughly happy, and many of them were singing as they toiled up the steep slope.

The people of Dorzi have some curious habits. Passing through the village next day, I saw some of them bidding each other good-bye. They bowed and scraped, and then solemnly patted their stomachs. And the spectacle astonished me as much as my animals' antics had amused them. Their huts are built with doors jutting out that bear an odd resemblance to a Roman nose.

I reached Addis Ababa on 13th January, 1920. There had been changes at the Legation since my last visit twelve months earlier. Captain the Hon. W. G. Thesiger, who was then Minister, had gone. So, too, had Mr. Gerald Campbell. And the departure of these old colleagues and their families, who had been at the Legation ever since my appointment to Abyssinia, left a big gap. Pending the arrival of a new Minister, Major Hugh Dodds was acting as Chargé d'Affaires. We now decided to make a big effort to carry out the object which we had all along had in view and get the Consulate for Southern Abyssinia established at Mega. Gardula, where it had been located since 1917, was not a really suitable place. It was too far from the frontiers; actually it was not in Boran at all. Between Gardula and the frontier lay the Sagan River with its deadly mule sickness, which made travelling to and fro dangerous



THE CONSULATE, MEGA.





and expensive. Moreover, the spot upon which the Consulate at Gardula had been erected was exposed to all the winds of Heaven, and the buildings were so cold and damp as to be almost uninhabitable during the winter. Mega, on the other hand, was an ideal position in every respect. The decision whether permission should or should not be given for the removal of the Consulate from Gardula to Mega rested mainly with Fitaurari Hapta Georgis, the owner of Boran. We broached the subject to him, and by dint of much persuasive argument succeeded, on 8th February, 1920, in obtaining his consent. Thus, our patience and perseverance for over five years had their reward. I myself was overjoyed, for I wanted nothing better than to have my headquarters fixed at the most delightful place in the whole of Southern Abyssinia.

On 23rd February, as soon as the Fitaurari gave me his written authority to make the transfer, I set out for Gardula. This was my fifth journey from Addis Ababa to the south, but as I followed a route which I have already described I shall content myself with recording that I reached Gardula once more on 18th March, and at once set about the removal of the Consulate to Mega. While the doors and window frames were being taken down and the documents and furniture packed, Wandim Aganyu, Gashi's son, arrived, much elated because he had recently been made a Balambaras. He brought with him letters from Fitaurari Hapta Georgis promoting both Woyessa and Gashi to the rank of Fitaurari, by which title, instead of Gerazmach, I shall henceforward refer to them. Woyessa was again placed in charge of Boran. Wandim Aganyu wrote me a friendly letter thanking me for my help in connection with the promotions, and I felt that I could count on Woyessa's and Gashi's assistance in getting my new buildings erected at Mega. Altogether, I

took an optimistic view of the political situation in Boran, and in the belief that the authorities would succeed in maintaining a reasonable measure of law and order, I suggested that the Boran who had taken refuge from the Tigre in British territory over a year ago should now be sent back into Abyssinia. I was prepared to guarantee their safety but not without reservations, as the following quotation shews: 'I should not ask for their return if they were going to be sent to a danger-zone; but, unless the Tigre reconquer the country, they would be as safe as any of us.'

Within a few weeks, I was compelled to revise my optimistic opinion and to withdraw the qualified guarantee which I had offered. Outrages by bandits were everywhere on the increase. On the main road from Gardula to Mega, between the Sagan River and El Wayo, Woyessa's own son, Alamu, who had robbed his father and turned outlaw, was particularly active. Ato Haili, the erstwhile judge, was also continuing his non-judicial operations in the neighbourhood of Kuncharo Mountain. This ruffian with some sixty cut-throats had surrendered and been forgiven, but he carried on just as before, making a fortune out of the hapless Boran natives and probably paying a good deal to Woyessa to stop him from asking too many questions. Nor did prospects for the future seem brighter when news came that two bandit leaders who had surrendered in Sidamo had been pardoned and given Government appointments. The chief centre of Tigre activities was in Liban, the tract of country between the Dawa and the Ganale Rivers. The Government soldiers at Mega declined to go to Liban to fight. They said (with a good deal of truth): 'We get no extra pay. If we are wounded, we get no compensation. If we die, we are not buried in a church-yard on consecrated ground. If our mules are killed or die from sickness,

they are not replaced. The Government gives us no rations and no clothes, no doctors and no medicines. So why should we run risks ? ' They much preferred to remain in their own villages, grow corn, and live comfortably ; and in their position, I myself should probably have been of their way of thinking.

During May and June, the bands of outlaws grew bolder and bolder, robbing and killing almost up to Mega itself. Their practice was to seize a few Boran, demand so many dollars, and, if the money was not produced, shoot them in cold blood. On 12th June, six mounted Boran, driven desperate, came to Mega to demand protection. Fitaaurari Woyessa summoned a council, and ordered the soldiers to go and fight. They all refused, saying that the big chiefs would not lead them and that they were tired of fighting. By a strange coincidence, Woyessa had a sudden attack of fever which confined him to his bed ! He could not go, and the other chiefs did not go, so the result was that nobody went. This, of course, was disastrous, for the brigands soon heard of it and drew the obvious inference that they could do whatever they pleased without fear of attack.

The majority of the common soldiers were in sympathy, if not in actual alliance, with the Tigre. From the Government, they got only a miserable pittance of 12 dollars (about £1 4s.) a year, and the local chiefs were too thoroughly selfish to trouble about food and clothing for their men. The latter, therefore, took whatever they could get from the Tigre, who paid handsomely for all services rendered.

Another disturbing element was introduced by the arrival of Lij Indala at Mega from Liban. This young gentleman was altogether insufferable. He anointed himself with cheap scent, and wore his hair long, dressing it so that it stuck out from his head like a mop of frozen rats' tails. Unfortunately, all the local chiefs were in great awe of him, for he

was a nephew of their master, Fitaaurari Hapta Georgis. He told me that the Tigre were very strong in Liban, and in the fight the year before had killed or wounded 150 of Kidani's men at a cost to themselves of only a few casualties, of which no more than 4 were Abyssinian, the rest belonging to the Konso and other native tribes. Kidani, it appeared, took an enormous number of bullocks to Addis Ababa with him. The Boran, in fact, probably lost more through his depredations than if they had been left to the tender mercies of the Tigre!

By this time, Woyessa's robber son, Alamu, had moved down to between Mega and Moyale, and was a source of constant anxiety to me in connection with the mails. The Abyssinian officer at Moyale had a fight with his band and captured a good haul of kit and 115 dollars, but unfortunately Alamu and his following got away unscathed. On 12th June, one of my Gurre syces on his way to Karayo was caught by the bandits. He was badly knocked about, his clothes were taken from him, and the mail was deliberately destroyed. Three days after this, two of my Abyssinian soldiers, returning from Moyale with mails, were chased but managed to evade their pursuers. A more horrible experience befell the wife of one Gerazmach Damte. She was going from Mega to Gardula when she was caught by Tigre, who kept her captive for one night, violated her in turn, and then released her. From these and many similar incidents it was clear that the Abyssinian Government had no control whatever of that part of Boran to the east of Moyale, while even in the rest of the province its authority was scarcely more than nominal.

The following letter which I received from a man who at one time was in my employ as interpreter may be of interest as giving an independent version of the chaos which prevailed. I quote it as written :

'A man named Kitaba, belonging to Fitaurari Woyessa, who is in charge of Moyale, spies when the traders come out of Moyale to the north, and he sends to the robbers to wait for them. This Kitaba has lots of thieves under himself who steals from other side branded mules. About Woyessa's son, a headman of Fitaurari Gashi sent twice to Fitaurari Woyessa whether they go for *shiftas* or not, but no answer to it yet. This thing is like Fitaurari Waldi's matter or even worse, when Woyessa has his headman at Moyale and his son to rob the country.'

While all this fresh trouble with the Tigre had been developing, the work on the new Consulate at Mega had been going ahead very satisfactorily. Woyessa made the necessary arrangements for the erection of my buildings, and everything was completed by the middle of July, 1920. I managed to obtain a big tree to serve as a flagstaff. Thirty men were needed to carry it, and, as may be imagined, we had some difficulty in fixing it in position. At length, however, it was erected on a spot exactly 19 yards from the Consulate. Almost immediately, I received a letter of protest from Fitaurari Woyessa. Nothing would satisfy him but an explicit letter from Fitaurari Hapta Georgis, to whom accordingly I applied. His permit came in due course. It ran thus: 'The British Consul, Captain Hodson, who is residing at Mega, has reported that you have stopped him from flying the British flag *from* his house on Sundays. Now do not stop him from doing so.' But an Abyssinian will always insist on reading instructions *au pied de la lettre*, and Woyessa was still able to maintain his point and prevent me from using the flagstaff which was 19 yards away from my house. The matter was too petty for me to pursue any further, so I meekly erected another flagstaff in direct contact with the building.

July, 1920, was an eventful month, marked by many important occurrences besides the opening of the Consulate in permanent quarters at Mega. In the first place, letters were received from Addis Ababa recalling Fitaaurari Woyessa, and it was reported that Fitaaurari Ayala, a brother of Fitaaurari Hapta Georgis's wife, had reached Gardula on his way to Boran to replace Woyessa. Next, Lij Indala was made a Kanyazmach and given the Liban and Yeban countries. This was an idiotic appointment, for even if Indala had been a desirable character—which he was not—he was far too young and inexperienced for one of the most difficult posts it would be possible to find. It did not need much knowledge of Abyssinian habits to be pretty certain that the Tigre with whom Indala professed to have made peace in Liban would remain there and carry on their depredations under the ægis of the Government. Incidentally, I heard that most of the brigands were furious with those who had come to terms with Indala, so he was not likely to find his new post a bed of roses.

On 12th July, Fitaaurari Woyessa with all the chiefs and practically all the troops left Mega. Some said that he was going to Arero to arrange terms with the Tigre, others that he was going to collect tribute from the Boran. There is a custom, it appears, by which, when a chief is promoted, his tenants are forced to pay him an extra tax, and as Woyessa had recently been raised to the rank of Fitaaurari he would doubtless be anxious to grab all he could before returning to Gardula. I inclined therefore to believe the second explanation was the true one.

While Woyessa extorted taxes from the Boran, his son, Alamu, both robbed and killed. Meanwhile, Woyessa's soldiers were deserting him and joining his son. In consequence, the latter's band of cut-throats was becoming daily more formidable.

Conditions were now so bad, with robber bands in force on all the roads, that I began to be anxious about the down mail from Addis Ababa. I sent off as many rifles as I could spare to meet the mail and bring it through, and I told the men that, if they were interfered with, they were to fight and not to surrender. These precautions were in vain. On 29th July, at El Sabbenta, a few hours from Moyale, the two mail runners were ambushed and seized and taken to Alamu's camp, about an hour from the road. Here the mail was taken from them, and they were given a letter for me :

'Let it reach the English Government Consul, Mr. Hodson.

How are you ? I am well.

The post goes to Moyale and returns to Mega. Why do you not send me a letter ? You despise my friendship.¹ Now because of this I have stolen your post. Send me either 50,000 dollars or 50,000 cartridges, whichever you like. I have not opened the secret letters yet.² Send me ³ either the dollars or the cartridges that I do not do so.

I, Alamu Woyessa, say this.

The mail runners were told to bring back an answer within five days to a certain Boran village in the neighbourhood, and were warned that the consequences would be serious if they attempted treachery. When they left the robbers' camp, they were ordered to go straight to Mega, and were informed that they would be shot if they tried to go to Moyale. Brigands

¹ This probably refers to my outspoken and unconcealed contempt of these scoundrels.

² This probably refers to letters sealed with red wax.

³ The impolite form of the imperative, i.e., the form employed in addressing an inferior or a servant, is used here.

accompanied them part of the way to see that these instructions were carried out.

The loss of the mail was disastrous, for it contained many important letters. Immediately I got the news, I sent off messengers to Woyessa telling him that, if he would not take any action, I was going to set out that evening and attack the band myself. This, I am afraid, was an idle boast; for at the moment, having sent some of my men to meet the mail runners and others to Gardula to discover whether Fitaaurari Ayala was coming south to take Woyessa's place, I could not muster more than five or six rifles. The Fitaaurari was so upset when he heard of the robbery that he collapsed and fell to the ground. It was a cruel blow to the old man that his son should have become such a villain, and I believe his emotion was sincere. He begged me not to go alone, promising that he himself would lead all his soldiers against the band, and asking me to tell the officers at Moyale to keep a strict watch on their side of the border in case Alamu should go there.

Before anything was done, news came of another bold stroke by Alamu. He and his gang had already carried out a number of raids on Boran villages in British territory, but during the night of the 7th-8th August they actually went to the length of attacking Moyale itself. Just before midnight, the officers were wakened by rifle shots from the direction of the village, and upon making investigations found that a traders' camp close to the native quarters had been raided by a band of about forty brigands from Jamok. One trader had been murdered, and 500 rupees in silver and 200 dollars, besides a quantity of trade goods, had been lifted. Before a patrol that was immediately sent out could arrive on the scene, the brigands had fled across the border and disappeared. Apparently, they surrounded the tents, scared off most of the occupants, and only fired off their rifles in

defiance before bolting. Five shots in all were fired, several of which were aimed at the *boma* and passed over the houses. Now, it was definitely known that Alamu had recently paid several visits to the Abyssinian *boma* opposite; he was there on 6th August and again on the following evening, while the raid was in progress. Furthermore, on 7th August, Ato Kitaba (whose activities as a spy for the Tigre have already been mentioned) was in Moyale. A night raid cannot be carried out on the spur of the moment, the ground must be carefully surveyed and plans laid in advance. In view of all these facts, it was impossible to avoid the inference that the so-called Government troops in the Abyssinian *boma* were well aware of the project, even if they themselves took no part in its execution. Nevertheless, when Waddington, then acting officer in charge of the Northern Frontier District, interviewed the Abyssinian whom Gashi had left in charge at Moyale, the latter said he knew nothing at all about the affair, beyond hearing shots the previous night. He also stated that he knew nothing of the whereabouts of Alamu, although the two of them were quietly sitting down together in Moyale *boma* at the time of the raid.

When I heard of this fresh outrage, I sought out Woyessa and the other chiefs and took the opportunity of telling them a few home truths. I pointed out that they never did anything but talk, that with them it was always 'to-morrow' or 'next week' but never 'to-day'. The lawlessness existing in Boran, I said, was entirely their own fault, and three-quarters of the Government troops, if not brigands themselves, were actually in league with the brigands. The British Government, I concluded, could not tolerate these repeated outrages; it was tired of feeble excuses and idle protestations and would insist upon the proper administration of this province. Through much

dealing with muleteers, cooks, and the like, I had acquired a certain capacity for expressing myself forcibly in the Galla language, which stood me in good stead on this occasion, and I noted with some satisfaction the signs of discomfort and anxiety which began to be visible upon the features of my audience. The question remained whether my plain speaking would spur them to effective action.

Alamu was unquestionably the most enterprising and daring criminal we had ever had to deal with in this part of the world, and he was not going to be an easy nut to crack. His two main strongholds were at El Sabbenta and Agal, both close to Moyale. At night, he and the other Abyssinians with him used to sleep in the centre of the camp, while on the outskirts, Burji, Konso, and other tribesmen were posted as sentries. From these strongholds he made sorties for purposes of robbery and blackmail, and on occasion he would remain absent for a fortnight or more at a time. His camp at El Sabbenta, I learnt, was visited at frequent intervals by women from Deka Roba, bringing beer, bread, and other supplies. The whole countryside, including Moyale itself, was full of his spies. The successful raid at Moyale had increased his prestige enormously, and his gang was bound to be augmented in consequence. Alamu, moreover, was a desperate character. Having murdered so many people already, he could expect no mercy if he were once laid by the heels. It was certain, therefore, that he would stop at nothing to avoid capture.

My own idea of the best way to tackle Alamu was to wait a while till he was not so much on the *qui vive*, and then to deliver a night attack with Mills bombs and Very lights. With a little luck, such a scheme, I thought, might be very successful. The brigands, being unacquainted with such refinements as Mills bombs and Very lights, would probably regard them as a visitation from the devil, and those who

escaped the bombs would have no fight left in them and only think of saving their skins. The success of such a plan—and indeed of any plan—would obviously depend on absolute secrecy. Woyessa and company, however, had other views. A day or two after my harangue, trumpets were blown, the troops were assembled, and, when the whole countryside was thoroughly roused, the fat old Fitaurari on an equally fat mule left Mega surrounded by a motley crowd to attack the robbers. The whole thing was a ludicrous farce. He had no more chance of catching Alamu than of finding a Great Auk's egg. Even the common soldiers saw the humour of the thing, and bandied jocular remarks upon it. They were soon back at Mega with nothing done.

Shortly afterwards, I went to Moyale. Waddington was then the officer in charge of the Northern Frontier District. He and I and the other officers had many a discussion upon ways and means of disposing of our friend Alamu. One plan, I remember, which we seriously discussed (and one evening, under the influence of a particularly good dinner, even approved), was to construct an infernal machine out of a Stokes shell. This we proposed to disguise as a mail and send in the usual way. It was to be set so that when the box containing it was opened it went off. One of the officers stationed at Moyale at that time was so intrigued by the idea that he spent hours in designing a machine, which he assured us could not fail. The difficulty was to know how to arrange about the mail runner, for we did not want the guiltless to suffer or to have innocent blood on our heads. However, we tackled this side of the problem and had devised some highly ingenious schemes when an awful thought struck me. It sprang, I believe, from a memory of one of Brigadier Gerard's exploits, when he was given letters to take through to headquarters which were *meant* to be captured but *were not*. Sup-

pose that by some trick of fate Alamu repented him of his evil deeds, and that ten days or so after despatching the 'mail' we received a letter couched in the following terms: 'To the officers of Moyale. How did you pass the day and night? Thank God, I am well. I stole your mail which you sent off to the north a few days ago. Since then my heart is sore, as it is not a good thing to touch other people's letters. I have therefore sent it on to the English Minister at Addis Ababa. I hope this will be remembered in my favour. I am short of cartridges. Please send me some. *Alamu Woyessa*.' No, in the light of day the scheme was *not* good enough. It would perhaps be useful as a scenario for the films, with the mails ahead, a mad pursuit, the mail runners entering the Legation, the pursuers following up the drive close on their heels—and then an explosion and no Legation.

When I returned to Mega, I found that Fitaurari Ayala had arrived from Gardula. He called on me, and evidently wished to be friendly. We had a long talk upon local political questions, and he did not attempt to deny the seriousness of the situation. He told me that he had written about everything to Fitaurari Hapta Georgis. Ayala's position at the moment was rather a difficult one, and he seemed nervous and uncomfortable. He was clearly going to be Governor, but he had not yet given this out officially. With the small following which he had with him he did not feel powerful enough to take any high-handed action, and was biding his time. In the meantime, a general 'hate' sprang up. Fitaurari Woyessa hated Fitaurari Ayala; Woyessa and Gashi were at daggers drawn; and most of the other chiefs were equally hostile to one another. There was an atmosphere of tense expectancy, much like that which reigns in a school at home when rules have been defied, and the Head is about to hold an

inquiry, and everyone is thinking that everyone else is going to sneak to save his own skin. If Ayala was to make a success of his mission and restore order out of chaos, he would have to co-operate with the local chiefs because he himself had no experience at all of conditions in Boran; and since such co-operation was impossible, the prospects of settling the border looked blacker than ever.

These fears were confirmed by the news of a serious reverse sustained during August by some Government troops in Liban. They were attacked by Tigre, and, after losing nine killed and five wounded, surrendered and were deprived of their rifles. Urgent messages were sent to Ayala and Woyessa to bring help to Liban. They went to the Daua, but history repeated itself: the troops refused to cross the river, pleading hunger and lack of provisions as their excuse, and so they all returned without doing anything.

At the beginning of September, a fight took place at El Melbana, a few hours from Mega, between a party of Alamu's men and some Government troops, mainly belonging to Gerazmach Walidi. Three of the brigands were killed and one captured. Now Walidi had lost two sons in the fighting in Liban, and his men, therefore, were not feeling particularly well disposed towards Tigre. They tied up their prisoner, scorned his offer of 300 dollars, then 400 dollars, for his release, and calmly cut his throat. In this fight an important letter of Alamu's was captured implicating most of the Moyale people with the brigands. It contained a list of persons who were to be rewarded for helping him.

Soon after this Fitaurari Gashi came to see me one day in a condition of pitiable terror. Alamu, it appeared, had sworn to kill him, and the old man was so afraid that he was practically in a state of collapse. He presented such a pathetic spectacle that I could not help feeling sorry for him. Although wicked,

he was not wicked enough to be on the side of the robbers, nor was he brave enough to take active steps against them on behalf of the Government. As a result he always fell between two stools, and nobody liked him. He told me that Alamu and Haili, the two most important brigand leaders, were now in communication with each other, and that the former, coveting a machine-gun above everything and wishing to replenish his supply of cartridges, was trying to arrange another attack on Moyale.

Shortly afterwards, utterly amazing developments took place. On 17th September, I received definite information that Alamu and Haili had joined forces and were in touch with Fitaurari Ayala. I taxed Ayala with this, but he denied it *in toto*. Within a day or so, Haili visited Mega and saw Ayala, and then, on 22nd September, Ayala and most of the chiefs left Mega with an air of great secrecy. They met Alamu a few hours away and made peace with him. They came back together to Mega the same evening, Ayala and the other chiefs and Alamu with fifty of his cut-throats. They held a feast, fired off rifles, and behaved exactly as if they had returned from a successful campaign. And the arch-scoundrel, Alamu, was given hospitality in the house of the Governor of Boran, Fitaurari Ayala, and went about openly with a halo round his head! The bare-faced effrontery of it all fairly left me gasping.

But there was not much that I could do. I wrote a strong letter to Fitaurari Gashi, recounting briefly what Alamu had done in the way of murder and robbery, and pointing out that the action of the chiefs could only be construed as a deliberate insult to my Government. Gashi sent me back an answer that he had had nothing to do with Alamu, but had kept entirely aloof from the whole affair and had told the chiefs that he could do nothing till he had heard from Fitaurari Hapta Georgis and consulted

me. In my report to the Legation, I urged that every effort should be made to have Alamu put in chains and sent up to Addis Ababa for punishment. The position was obviously impossible if, without consultation with the officers at Moyale or myself, a scoundrel like Alamu was to be entertained at Mega until it was his mood to return to the road once more. (The stolen mail, of course, had not been restored, nor had any reparation been made or offered.) As for the future of the province under the existing corrupt and inefficient administration, I contented myself with quoting the following verse :

‘ If seven maids with seven mops
Swept it for half a year,
Do you suppose ’ the Walrus said,
‘ That they would get it clear ? ’
‘ I doubt it ’ said the Carpenter,
And shed a bitter tear.

CHAPTER XVI

ESCAPES AND SURRENDERS

Chaos continues—bandit leader escapes—Government orders defied—Alamu's second surrender—Boran fugitives in British territory—second British occupation of Gaddaduma—my recall to the capital—sixth journey south.

THE chaos and anarchy which prevailed in Boran during 1920 were not peculiar to that province. Similar conditions existed over the whole of Southern Abyssinia—practically everywhere south of the capital. Attacks on mail runners were now so frequent that the next time I had to send an urgent despatch to Moyale I disguised my men as Boran, and sewed the letters in the seats of their trousers, a method which ensured safety, but, as we found afterwards, diminished legibility.

Almost immediately there followed an event which, exasperating as it was, was bound to happen sooner or later. Alamu, tiring of the dullness of a respectable life at Mega, bolted on the night of 19th–20th October. To add insult to injury, he persuaded ten of Fitaurari Ayala's soldiers to go with him. A rifle is one of the most valuable things a man can possess in Abyssinia, and of course Ayala's men took theirs with them. I could appreciate the poetic justice of the situation. Ayala had been the prime mover in coming to terms with Alamu, and the latter now displayed his gratitude by stealing ten of his rifles. As a result of Alamu's escape, a numerous band of robbers was re-established in the neighbourhood of Tuka and Moyale, consisting of Aba Boka's following with

30 rifles, Haili's with 50, Alamu's with 50, and Ayala's deserters with 10—that is to say, roughly 150 rifles in all.

These scoundrels soon made their presence felt. On the night of 28th October, a party of them attacked the Abyssinian *boma* at Moyale, killed one of the traders there, and looted the whole place.

The sufferings of the tribesmen at the hands of the Tigre could hardly be exaggerated; in fact, the only way for a Boran to save his skin and any of his property was to take *gubo* (hush-money) from the brigands and hold his tongue. The general result was summed up pretty accurately by the officer at Moyale when he wrote: 'Should the present state of affairs continue, there will eventually be found on the Abyssinian side of the frontier a few poverty-stricken remnants of a people who were formerly among the wealthiest of tribes.'

When the chiefs at Mega heard of Aba Boka's attack on the Abyssinian village at Moyale, a howl of rage went up at his temerity in daring to touch the Lord's anointed. Fitaurari Ayala began to feel nervous. He had been ordered by Fitaurari Hapta Georgis to garrison Moyale, but had put off going there from month to month in the usual Abyssinian way. The event now forced his hand, and, although it was rather a case of locking the stable-door after the horse had been stolen, off he went to Moyale. Soon after his arrival, he made an attack on Aba Boka's band. He managed to kill the Boran herdsman who was looking after the robbers' stock, but that was the only casualty on either side. My own impression was that Ayala did not intend anything serious, but simply wanted to put up some show which might be useful if his earlier inaction were called in question. A little later, some of Ayala's men had another engagement with what they thought were robbers. However, after firing at each other for a couple of hours, again

without any casualties, they found that the supposed brigands were Government troops!

The appeal which I had made for the arrest of Alamu when he surrendered now bore fruit, for during November instructions to this effect were received from Addis Ababa :

From Fitaurari Hapta Georgis, Minister for War.
To Fitaurari Ayala.

Greetings.

I hear that the son of Fitaurari Woyessa, Alamu, has taken the oath of obedience, and is with you now.

When you receive this letter, I order you to chain him up by both hands to two guards, and to set over him the necessary guards to watch him, and to send him up to Addis Ababa as quickly as possible.

To all the officers who are in Boran.

Chain up the son of Fitaurari Woyessa, Alamu, and send him up with the necessary police to prevent him from escaping. If he escapes, I hereby inform you that you will be held responsible for all that he has done.

(Seal of Fitaurari Hapta Georgis)

The order, however, came too late, for Alamu had escaped and returned to his old trade. But on 25th November, Fitaurari Gashi called to see me with the interesting information that emissaries had arrived from Alamu sent to Kanyazmach Indala to arrange a second surrender. According to Gashi's tale, he and Indala had sworn so many lies to these messengers that Ananias at his best would not have been able to hold a candle to them. In Rome one has to do as the Romans do, and I did not consider it part of my duty to pass any criticisms upon their Machiavellian schemes for the apprehension of the criminal. On the very next day, Alamu with fifty of his men surrendered to Indala at Mega. So far good, but when

Fitaurari Ayala arrived post-haste from Moyale to make arrangements for sending Alamu up to Shoa, affairs took a different turn. Indala flatly refused either to chain him up or to hand him over. Ayala wrote to me: 'Fitaurari Hapta Georgis sent a message to us, saying "Chain Alamu with double chains and send him to me". But now Kanyazmach Indala has prevented this, saying and swearing that he has taken charge of him, and that he will not give his hand nor deliver him up. I am informing you of this matter to let you know about it.'

Such deliberate defiance of an order from Fitaurari Hapta Georgis—one couched in the strongest terms and addressed to all the officers in Boran—I had never known before. This by itself was striking evidence of the unprecedented anarchy which prevailed. Ayala told me that he himself had volunteered to be chained up with Alamu, but Gashi was too frightened to tackle Indala. Gashi was fond of saying that he was afraid of no one but God and his master (Hapta Georgis), but his statement would have been a little more in accordance with the facts if it had been qualified by the inclusion of a few less exalted names. Indala himself was not a man of any weight. He had been a bandit before and knew what it meant to be chained up. He was the only man on the spot, however, who had any considerable force behind him, but there was little to choose between his men and any of the Tigre bands which infested the province. They had no permanent tenants in Boran, and once they had finished the loot which they had brought with them from Liban, there would be nothing for them but robbery and murder. Indala doubtless appreciated this, but counted perhaps on making himself a sort of brigand king with their support.

During December, Haili, the judge turned robber, emulated Alamu's escape. His jailer got married, and the wedding was celebrated with a general jolli-

fication. The guards all got drunk, and the rest was easy, for Haili, like all the bandit leaders, had accomplices everywhere. He got clear away to the Sagan River, where he committed many robberies, and then came back to Boran and joined forces with Aba Boka. The unexpected and inopportune return of Haili added fresh bitterness to the struggle between the bandits and the official Abyssinians. While he was in safe custody at Gardula, his camp was attacked and all his property seized. In addition, three of his men were killed, three wounded, and three taken prisoners. The captives were brought to Mega, and I undertook to look after the wounded, and by careful management succeeded in getting a lot of useful information from them. A treatment with strong carbolic acid, which I have found to be the best thing for wounds, does not tend to make a person uncommunicative. The unwounded prisoners—in accordance with the local custom—were soon allowed to escape. The resemblances between Southern Abyssinia and Southern Ireland in the year of grace 1920 were many and striking, but in Abyssinia no one was ever 'shot while attempting to escape'.

Haili's return to the road more than balanced Alamu's second surrender, and robberies and outrages multiplied. The representatives of the Government had, to all intents and purposes, no control except at Mega and its immediate neighbourhood. I strove to persuade them to collect all their forces and reoccupy Gaddaduma as a first step towards the pacification of the province, but they resolutely declined to undertake such an additional responsibility on the ground that they had their hands full in holding Mega. I was on very good terms with all of them, and one after the other would come to see me and tell me at interminable length how wicked everybody else was.

Early in January, 1921, the Boran living at the

foot of the escarpment to the west of Mega, driven desperate by the depredations of Aba This and Aba That, fled *en masse* to seek asylum in British territory. They were followed by bandits and Government troops, in different parties, with the common aim of preventing them from leaving the country. Some of the Boran were killed, some were caught and brought back, some succeeded in crossing the frontier and making their way towards Huri and Hor.

This was by no means an isolated incident, and indeed, so far from returning Boran refugees into Abyssinia, the officials in Kenya Colony had been obliged to receive still more fugitives. Moreover, outrages by brigands coming into British territory from Abyssinia were more frequent and more serious than they had ever been. It is no exaggeration to say that the situation on the border, from the British point of view, was immeasurably worse in 1920 than it had been during the period immediately before the joint expedition of 1919 described in previous chapters. There seemed no hope of any improvement. The local Abyssinian officials, if they were not bandits under the disguise of respectability, admitted their powerlessness. The central authorities were too much engrossed in intrigue and counter-intrigue to trouble themselves about what was happening on the southern boundaries of their empire. There was only one thing left for the Government of Kenya Colony to do, namely, to take such independent action as would enable it to guarantee security of life and property for the people living under its protection. For this purpose, all that was necessary was to patrol the frontier effectively, but this, as I have explained earlier, could not be accomplished unless Gaddaduma was occupied. Accordingly, in January, 1921, after every alternative possibility had been explored and found wanting, the decision was taken and Gaddaduma was again occupied by British

troops, this time without any understanding or misunderstanding with the Abyssinian Government. Our intention was to hold it until such time as the Abyssinians would garrison it themselves.

As a consequence of this move, I was called up to Addis Ababa. I left Mega on 23rd January, spent a few days at Gardula, which I left on 3rd February, and reached the capital on 13th February after a rapid journey.

Six weeks soon passed in discussions of border questoins, relieved by polo and lawn tennis, and on 1st April, 1921, I set out from Addis Ababa on my sixth journey south. This time I had with me a large number of horses which I had bought on behalf of the Government of Kenya Colony. During the first part of the journey, owing to the failure of the small rains, there was no grass at all. Such barley as I could buy, or most of it, I had to give to the horses, with the result that my mules got poorer and poorer and had to be taken very slowly. The first untoward incident happened in the Gurage country. The horses, as was the usual custom, were all tethered to a strong English rope for the night. They were given their usual feed of corn and were guarded by sentries. Early in the morning, for no earthly reason—they had not even the excuse of a lion or an hyena—they stampeded, rushed through the mule lines, and caused the mules to stampede too. The stupid creatures had not sufficient sense to keep to the roads, but took to the hills. We managed to secure them all, but only after much trouble.

I now took double precautions, and every night, besides tying all the animals up, hobbled them as well. Apart from one attempted stampede, nothing exciting happened till we reached Kasse, a waterless stretch of country cut up by numerous steep ravines and infested with brigands. After trekking for hours, I decided to halt. It was just before sunset,

and I wanted to camp while there was some light so as to make all the horses secure. While the tents were being pitched, a large party of Dajazmach Balcha's soldiers passed. They called out to us: 'Don't camp where you are. We have seen *shiftas* behind us; so come on with us.' However, I did not feel inclined to move and remained where I was. Having taken all precautions against a surprise attack, we turned in. Just after midnight, the animals again stampeded, and ten horses and fifteen mules got away. They had torn up the picket rope, and the hobbles, made of local rope, had not stood the strain. The men followed them for miles, but could not catch up to them that night. Next morning, we could not stay where we were for lack of water, so with the few men left we had to double-load most of the remaining mules. It was cruel luck that this should have happened in this particular spot, one of the worst places on the whole journey, especially when we had done everything we could think of to avoid it. Some of my men stayed behind to search for the lost animals, and several weeks later brought them nearly all back.

Since then, I have had my mules stampede on more than one occasion. It generally happens when they are very fat and well-fed, as were the horses in Kasse. The experience is more than annoying, for it is always possible that one may not recover a single animal.

When I reached Boran, I found that a rumour had obtained currency to the effect that I had been captured after my departure for Addis Ababa. The explanation of this was simple. Under prevailing conditions it was most inadvisable to advertise one's movements, so I made a practice of setting out from the Consulate in secret, leaving behind a letter to the Governor wishing him good-bye and describing my plans. All the chiefs considered that this was

the wisest procedure to adopt. Now, on the particular occasion when I was going to Addis Ababa early in 1921, I was more than usually anxious to get off unobserved, because Fitaurari Hapta Georgis had sent down orders that I was to be escorted through the brigand-infested parts. I have not been educated to travel in state, and I dislike intensely having a crowd of people riding in front and at the rear. I much prefer to trek in humble fashion. On the day I left Mega, I managed to get away unobserved very early in the morning, and my letter of farewell was delivered to Fitaurari Gashi about midday. Thereupon, more attentive than at other times to his master's instructions, he had the war trumpets blown, collected a motley crowd, and followed me up. I had no idea that he would do this, or otherwise he would never have caught me! He was extremely pleasant and amicable and escorted me for several days, and eventually we parted on the best of terms. The manner of his departure from Mega, however, was enough to start rumours that he had gone to arrest me, although in point of fact he went to protect me from brigands.

CHAPTER XVII

SECOND EVACUATION OF GADDADUMA

Abyssinian expedition to the south—an experimental pigeon post—local anti-British intrigues—a military dandy—second evacuation of Gaddaduma.

THE second occupation of Gaddaduma by British troops, carried out in January, 1921, was a drastic step. Its justification lay in the utter powerlessness of the Abyssinian Government to maintain even the semblance of order on its own side of the frontier. The occupation was not in any sense a 'land-grabbing' or 'imperialist' adventure, but solely a measure of self-protection forced upon us by existing circumstances. While Gaddaduma was unoccupied, Tigre and other robbers could water there and raid our natives and generally make things unpleasant for us.

While I was in Addis Ababa, it was decided that Fitaurari Hapta Georgis should himself go to Boran and put the province in order, when Gaddaduma would be handed over to him. In the meantime letters had been sent appointing Fitaurari Ayala Governor of this province.

Early in June, however, we learnt that Hapta Georgis was detained in the capital by political affairs, and that he was sending down Dajazmach Asaffa as his substitute with a large body of troops.

Great preparations were made at Mega for the reception of this officer. Buildings were erected and a good camp made. But it was all wasted labour,

for when he arrived, he preferred to stop in his own tents.

Because of the long distance from Mega to Moyale, I thought it would be a good plan to start a carrier-pigeon service. I requisitioned some pigeons from Nairobi, and in due course six birds arrived at Moyale. They were installed in the top of the Fort, an ideal place for them and a conspicuous landmark for miles around. We looked forward to easy and frequent communications between the two places. When I went to Mega, I should only have to take a couple of birds with me, write out my message, release a bird, and in two hours or so my letter would arrive at Moyale. McCallum, who was very clever with his hands, made an excellent travelling cage out of an old waste-paper basket. One day, as a test, I took this cage, with three pigeons inside, some little distance from Moyale and released the birds at intervals. The first one returned but the others were never seen again. This was a great disappointment. I must say I had my doubts about the homing instincts of these birds when I let the second out. It flew as fast as it could in the opposite direction to Moyale. I thought this strange for a carrier-pigeon, but I tried to persuade myself that this was the normal procedure, and that it would eventually turn and take the right course. It never did.

There were now four pigeons left. Colonel Llewellyn took two of these to Gaddaduma. He had to send an important message to Moyale. He wrote it out, fastened it to the birds, and released them. They flew lazily to the top of a hut and there remained. The Colonel, not unnaturally irritated by this grave dereliction of duty, began to hurl things at them, but they merely hopped about from one place to another. The Colonel's message did not reach Moyale by pigeon post, and for all I know those two little birds are still hopping about at Gaddaduma, flirting with the

ring doves. There were still two pigeons left, but all the hopes we had placed in them had now faded away. We decided to make no more experiments, and when I was last at Moyale, they and their progeny were still there, affectionately cherished by the officers of the station in the hope that the children would turn out better than their parents or expiate their offences in pigeon pie.

To return to more serious matters, Dajazmach Asaffa marched slowly south, and on 12th July arrived at Dubuluk, a few hours from Mega. On the 14th he entered Mega itself. His arrival, with 2,500 men and a baggage-train miles long, was an imposing spectacle. He had at least one cannon with him, wrapped up in cloth, and carried by a strong mule. He had also two machine-guns, and possibly others hidden away.

Polite letters passed between us, and next morning I visited his camp. He received me in great state with his whole army drawn up in two long lines. We were already friends, as I had previously met and liked him. In fact, I had always found him a very charming person.

On this occasion, I was rather worried about how I was to entertain him suitably, for I had nothing at all in the way of drink except a few bottles of a particularly horrible brand of Cape sherry which was so bad that my friends at Moyale refused to accept a case of it when I offered it to them as a present.

This question of friendship with Abyssinians is the source of frequent difficulties. If one is on good terms with a chief, he may quite possibly suffer for it, owing to the suspicion with which he is regarded by the uneducated Abyssinians, who at once imagine that he is under European influence. On the other hand, unless one is on friendly terms, there is little chance of satisfactory negotiations.

When Asaffa arrived at Mega, he sent me a present

of two guinea-fowl, and on the conclusion of our interview, he gave me a riding-mule. In return I presented him with a writing-case and an elephant-gun. In addition to his gifts he ordered his band to serenade me. The din it made was terrific, and most unpleasant to European ears.

The anti-British element in Boran did their utmost to stir up trouble between us. They told Asaffa that we had invaded their territory in several places, and that I had refused to build the Consulate in any spot except near to a huge cave where I could store cannon and machine-guns. However, I had little difficulty in proving to him the absurdity of these statements. We then spoke about Gaddaduma, and I carefully explained the reasons for our action. I told him we did not deny that Gaddaduma was in Abyssinian territory, but that owing to the anarchy which had existed in Boran, British natives watering there, as they were entitled to do under our treaty with Menelik, were repeatedly molested and had no security at all. In addition, extensive raids into British territory, accompanied unfortunately by loss of life and stock, had originated in that neighbourhood. We had waited for months and months. Fitaurari Hapta Georgis had sent letters instructing the officers in Boran to go and garrison Gaddaduma, but not a single soldier had entered the place. As a last resort, we had been compelled in self-defence to send our own men there; but now he had come, I felt sure he would restore law and order to the advantage of both our Governments. As soon as ever this was done, we were prepared to evacuate.

The next day I received a visit from one of his officers who had formerly served with the Italian army. In appearance this gentleman might have stepped straight out of a comic opera. He was dressed in a light blue cavalry cloak, khaki tunic and breeches, and a pair of light yellow leggings, so highly



DAJAZMACH ASAFFA.
(With photograph of his wife and picture of the Virgin Mary.)



polished that you could see your face in them. The collar of his tunic was fastened with three imitation diamond studs, and round his neck he wore a red ribbon from which hung a large cross studded with imitation jewels. I must say I was not favourably impressed, though afterwards he proved himself a capable and efficient soldier.

In due course we left Mega and camped together the first night. The next day, I rode on ahead to discuss matters with Waddington who was then in charge of the border. The Dajazmach arrived a few days later and final arrangements were then made for the handing over of Gaddaduma. These being settled to our satisfaction, the next few days were spent in feasting.

Our second evacuation of Gaddaduma followed almost at once, and I then went on there, with Asaffa and his army, to see the Abyssinian garrison safely installed.

CHAPTER XVIII

PACIFICATION OF THE BORDER

The Boran tenants—an anxious situation—loyalty of my men—conference at Moyale—Alamu in chains—Abyssinian army returns north—a trip to the Daua River—calm on the border.

AFTER Gaddaduma, the Boran tenants. During our earlier discussions, Dajazmach Asaffa had assured us that the only thing that interested him was Gaddaduma. It is always difficult to tell whether an Abyssinian really means what he says, for they are consummate actors; but, for my own part, I was convinced that Asaffa was speaking the truth and did not want to have trouble with us over the question of the Boran tenants. The army, however, almost to a man, *did*. The talk among the troops was to the effect that we had feasted Asaffa and he had feasted us, and that he had not put us out of Gaddaduma, as ordered, but that we had left of our own accord with all our kit and the honours of war. They therefore drew the inference that, if Asaffa returned without recovering the tenants, he would have accomplished nothing, and we should have the laugh over them, as usual. Raiding on a large scale was, of course, the means of getting back their subjects which the Abyssinians had in view, and constant pressure was put upon Asaffa to induce him to countenance such action. It was not going to be easy for him to stand out for a moderate policy upon this issue, and his position was rendered still more difficult by the arrival of fresh instructions

from Addis Ababa urging him to press for the handing over of the tenants.

When, in early August, 1921, I accompanied Asaffa and his army to Gaddaduma, he was only able to obtain a few camels for his transport the day we left Moyale, and he remarked to me—politely but pointedly—that it was because we had taken all their tenants. The next day, the country we passed through was entirely deserted by natives. There were not even Boran to draw water for the troops and their animals. Commenting on this, the Dajazmach asked what was the good of this country to them now that there was not a single living soul in it. He also told me that there were 4,000 of their subjects in our territory (which was an exaggeration). He wanted to know our decision by the time he reached Gaddaduma, and said that if it were unfavourable he would have to report to Addis Ababa for new instructions—from which it was clear that he himself did not want trouble over this question if it could possibly be avoided. Playing for time, I asked the Dajazmach to put into writing exactly what he had been ordered by his Government to demand, and I undertook to bring back a reply from Waddington, who, however, as I knew, would be, not at Gaddaduma, but at Moyale. As we concluded our discussion, the Dajazmach said they all knew that the officers at Moyale had to do what I ordered in connection with Abyssinian affairs, and he relied on me to see that his request was granted. He really believed this and was not merely flattering me.

The army became every day more restive on account of the delay in the settlement of this question of the tenants. The men said that they had been brought south to fight, that they had come a long way, lost many mules *en route*, had no *taj*, and were leading a hard life. 'If we have work to do, let us do it quickly and go back to our homes' was the

general attitude. When they once knew that we had no intentions of returning their tenants, they might well get out of control and start raiding across the frontier, or the Dajazmach might give way to the insistent local propaganda and himself initiate raiding. Not very far away, there were nearly 1,000 ex-Tigre ready to start their old games, and the merest wink from the Dajazmach would be enough to set the ball rolling. Thus, the situation on the border was still fraught with anxiety for all of us.

I ought to put in a word of praise for the admirable way my own Abyssinians behaved all through this trying time. The soldiers often taunted them for serving a foreigner, and threatened that later on they would cut off, first a hand, and then a foot, as they did to the Abyssinians who were with the Italians in the Aduwa campaign. In fact, my men had a very difficult lot, and I was more than grateful for their loyalty. Looking back on those days, I suppose I ought not to have been surprised if attempts had been made to suborn my servants. Curiously enough, the thought never entered my head at the time—probably because I had complete confidence in my judgement and experience. I had made mistakes, as every man must, in choosing and dealing with my various employees, but I never made the same mistake twice, and so, as time went on, I had less and less trouble with them. The thought and care I bestowed upon this subject were well repaid by the unswerving loyalty which my men shewed under the strain of conditions which certainly tested them to the utmost.

The Dajazmach, as I have mentioned, expected to meet Waddington at Gaddaduma, and to explain away the latter's non-appearance I had to draw on my imagination. Asaffa, however, continued to press the question of the tenants. He went over all the old ground: it was impossible for Abyssinians to live in the Boran province without their subjects,

because the soldiers depended on them for pay, food, and transport; if it was unlawful for them to keep our tenants (a reference to our treaty rights), it was equally unlawful for us to keep theirs. I did my best to explain that there was no question of our detaining the refugees against their will, but that by the law of nations and our own customs we were entitled to give asylum to those fleeing from persecution. But Asaffa was not satisfied, and only said he would put his request in writing and come to Moyale for a reply.

How acute this question of the tenants was for the Abyssinians can easily be shewn by a parallel. Suppose most of our natives of the Northern Frontier District were to cross into Abyssinia. We should, of course, have the greatest difficulty in getting transport or food. And if, in addition, we had to collect our salaries from these same natives, instead of having them paid into our banking accounts monthly by a paternal Government, we should feel it a good deal more. *Mutatis mutandis*, this exactly describes the situation from the Abyssinian point of view. As long as the Boran province was denuded of its inhabitants, there was little hope of quiet times on the border. Those Boran who remained would have to pay more in taxes and labour to the Abyssinians, and would therefore be still more anxious to cross into our territory when opportunity offered. The position then would tend to become worse rather than better, and in the long run nothing would stop the Abyssinians from following up their tenants and trying to regain them. Moreover, unless the refugees were moved right away from the frontier (which would create as many difficulties as it would solve), they would have to water their stock during the dry season at the wells lying in Abyssinian territory. Whether we could claim protection under Menelik's treaty for them as well as our own subjects

seemed more than doubtful, and very probably the only way to ensure their safety when forced to water in Abyssinia would be to announce that we should treat their seizure as a hostile act. And it was too much to expect the authorities to take the risk of war for the sake of a few hundred Abyssinian subjects.

However, when the conference was held at Moyale to settle the question, the Dajazmach was unexpectedly accommodating. When told that we could not return the tenants, he accepted the decision and said that he would have to report it to Addis Ababa. He even undertook not to seize Abyssinian subjects and their stock when they watered in Abyssinia. In fact, he promised so much that we felt that the millennium would have arrived if he did everything he said he would do.

There appeared to be two reasons for Asaffa's conciliatory attitude. In the first place, rumours got about that the political situation in the north was critical and that Ras Tafari might at any moment be overthrown and Lij Yasu restored. Such a reversal of the revolution of 1916 was the last thing the Dajazmach wished, for his father, Ras Lul Saggad, had been killed in the fight against Negus Michael. In the second place, the Dajazmach's troops were tending to become restive. His men had no stake in the country, and had already lost many mules from the Sagan River sickness. Their supplies were beginning to run short, and grain which was said to have been despatched for their use had not arrived. Under these conditions, they did not relish garrison duty at all, and there was intense dissatisfaction when Asaffa gave instructions that 600 men were to remain at Gaddaduma—200 of his own troops, 200 of Ato Gabru's following, and 200 of the local soldiery. When the French interpreter mentioned to the Dajazmach in my presence that the men would not stay in a fever-infested spot



GROUP AT MOYALE.

(The Author, E. Waddington, Asaffa, Col. Llewellyn.)

with no stock watering at the wells to supply them with food, he burst into a furious rage and said that his orders were Government orders, and if anyone refused to obey them he would have him flogged. But although the Dajazmach was a man of character, who knew how to keep his people in order, he probably realised that he would not be able to hold his men together for long, when feeling was so strong. For me, as an observer, it was amusing to see how Gaddaduma, now that the Abyssinians had regained it, was a white elephant to them.

There now reappeared on the border Kanyazmach Indala, a nephew of Fitaurari Hapta Georgis, with a motley horde of troops from Gardula and many of the ex-Tigre and surrendered bandits. His force was fully 3,500 rifles strong and far outnumbered Asaffa's army. It included Alamu, whose arrest and trial we had demanded for his offences in robbing my mails. Indala was the sort of man who could be expected to do anything that would cause trouble, and if he gave a lead all the local malcontents who stood in awe of Asaffa would soon rally round him. I met this gentleman once again in Asaffa's tent at Deka Roba.

My personal relations with the Dajazmach continued to be most friendly, but it was as much as I could do to counteract the persistent anti-British propaganda which was poured into his ears from all sides. As it was, there was plenty of talk about his being bought by us—simply because he had enough sense to take a large pinch of salt with the fantastic tales of our actions and plans which were brought to him. Moreover, his own position became rather delicate. Hapta Georgis's officers, quite without foundation, began to suspect that he was working to get the Boran province for himself, and they were still more disgusted because he would not allow them to raid into our territory.

Indala was the principal danger, and I persistently

pressed Asaffa to send him away to Liban beyond the Daua River. He eventually agreed to do this, but I very much doubted whether he would feel strong enough to carry out his promise, and was resigning myself to a gradual worsening of the situation. However, on 28th August, while I was still at the Abyssinians' camp near Dekä Roba, a letter came to me from Asaffa, saying: 'Alamu Woyessa is caught. He will go to Addis Ababa. You said you would come and see me to-day. I am very pleased. I will wait for you at 2 or 3 p.m. We will talk of everything. Please tell my friends the chiefs at Moyale about my helping them [i.e., in arresting Alamu].' The reason given for the arrest of this notorious scoundrel was the murder of several of Hapta Georgis's tenants, and not his offences against us. This was not exactly what we desired, but still it was a great thing to have him safely chained up on any score.

When I saw Asaffa the same afternoon, he gave me another interesting piece of information: a telephone message (i.e., a message telephoned to Gardula and then forwarded by runner) had just been received from the Government recalling Kanyazmach Indala with all his men to Addis Ababa at once, and he was leaving the very next day. Two items of good news on one day were more than I was accustomed to. It almost looked as if things on the border were going to settle down at last and allow us to enjoy life in peace and quiet.

Almost immediately afterwards, Dajazmach Asaffa decided to send back the bulk of his troops to Gamo. This he was practically compelled to do because the convoys of grain from the north had still failed to materialise. Ato Gabru's men at Gaddaduma were in even worse case. Nearly all their mules had died, and they were reduced to selling some of their cartridges for food. Asaffa himself followed his men

to Gardula after a week's delay. To outward appearance, his expedition had accomplished nothing (apart from the arrest of Alamu) except the recovery of Gaddaduma, which was clearly its main object, but he left the situation on the border much better than he found it simply because he was one of the few chiefs who had the moral courage to restrain the turbulent element. I really liked the Dajazmach and had nothing but the highest praise for him. He could not fairly be blamed for his failure to arrest the other criminals on our list besides Alamu. If he had tried to do so, there would have been a popular outcry against him as pro-British. Even as it was, he ran serious risk of having accusations brought against him for not regaining the Boran tenants.

Immediately Asaffa left, I set off for the Daua River district to investigate the local situation in consequence of a raid which took place near Dolo at the beginning of August. The British post at Dolo is less than a mile from the junction of the Daua and the Juba. North of the Daua and west of the Juba, right in the junction of the two rivers, lies the small Abyssinian village of Odo which is in the Liban province. Opposite this, on the left bank of the Juba, are two villages close together called Bi, between which the Abyssinian-Italian boundary runs. The northern one is in the Abyssinian province of Bale, while in the southern some Italian constabulary are stationed. Three countries, therefore, are interested in this spot, Abyssinia, Italy, and Great Britain; and Abyssinian interests are divided between Fitaurari Hapta Georgis (Boran) and Dajazmach Haile Selassie (Bale). These complications obviously make the neighbourhood a happy hunting ground for those afflicted with raiding propensities. Moreover, it is the habitat of unpleasant Somali tribes who give both the Abyssinians and ourselves a good deal of trouble.

The Dagodie or Yaben are nearly always on bad terms with the Gurre, living on British territory, and raid whenever they get a suitable opportunity. The Aulihan, who were driven from our territory after the sack of Serenli, are continually seeking to return. The outlaws who find a comparatively safe refuge in this district join any party if they think loot or profit is to be gained. The general factor of most importance is the continual thrust of the Somali tribes from east to west, which is already felt and will create a problem of considerable difficulty in the future.

The day before I reached Dolo, an Italian aeroplane from Lugh passed over and dropped a letter of greeting to our officers. It created a great impression on the natives, some of whom, it was reported, thought it was a huge bird and fired on it.

I returned to Mega and found that the border was still quiet. Fitaurari Ayala, who had been left in charge of Boran when Dajazmach Asaffa went back to Shoa, was behaving in a most exemplary fashion. He even handed over a couple of deserters from Moyale whom he captured—an action which was altogether unprecedented and made him highly unpopular with the local soldiery. Ato Gabru, who, having at last received some supplies of flour, was still at Gaddaduma, was also conducting himself very satisfactorily, and allowing large numbers of our stock to water there without raising any obstacles. He asked the British officer stationed at Gurrar to lunch one day and entertained him royally with excellent food, red wine, and English beer. The best evidence of the great change for the better which had come about is the fact that the dry season had passed without a single raid—the Dawa River district, of course, excluded. The Abyssinian authorities seemed genuinely grateful because we evacuated Gaddaduma, and the way in which our borders had been respected since then proved that we had lost no prestige.

Fitaaurari Ayala approached me about this time to obtain permission to shoot two elephants and two rhinoceros in our territory. He was not fired with a great passion for big-game shooting; he simply wanted to qualify to wear the personal adornments with which Abyssinian custom rewards the slayer of these animals. The elephants were near Deka Roba, sometimes on one side of the frontier and sometimes on the other, so he would not have to go more than a few miles into our territory. His request, moreover, gave us a good opportunity of shewing our appreciation of his services in keeping order in Boran, and in allowing me to travel about with no hindrance at all. I supported his application, and in the normal course would probably have accompanied him on his hunting expedition, but as it happened, I had gone home on leave when the desired permission arrived from Nairobi.

CHAPTER XIX

MAINLY GEOGRAPHICAL

Journey to Addis Ababa—the chain of lakes—trial of Alamu—seventh journey south—Lakes Stefanie and Rudolf—back to the capital—home.

IN December, 1921, I left Boran for Addis Ababa. On my way through Sidamo, I called on the Governor, Dajazmach Balcha, at Hadra Salam. He received me very well, so I took the opportunity of asking his permission to let me visit Lake Awasa and continue my journey to the east of the chain of lakes, instead of keeping to the main caravan route, which passes through Kasse to the west. So far from raising any objections, the Dajazmach gave me an excellent man as guide, and every day I was provided with food and bullocks at his orders.

Lake Awasa is a pretty sheet of water, but the fishing is unaccountably poor. The natives say there are no crocodiles here, and I certainly never saw one the whole time I was in this neighbourhood. Their absence is remarkable, for the lakes below are full of them. The water was so clear and inviting that I was sorely tempted to take a swim, but I decided that I would not risk making the exception which proves the rule. The natives paddle on the lake in a flimsy kind of canoe, made entirely of reeds, which seats only one person and is very insecure and uncomfortable.

I travelled up the east side of this lake some distance from its shores till I reached the large swamps called Wando, which are just beyond the boundary of

Sidamo in the Arusi province. There are some very deep, narrow, swift streams here in which I tried to catch fish, without any success. The natives, I was told, pound up the leaves of a tree called *bir-birra* and throw them into the water, to stupefy the fish, which are then easily caught. There is a hill here called Awaro, where Satan is popularly supposed to reside. The mountain nyala is also found there, which is more interesting. I crossed this hill and then came to the village of Shashamana. The countryside hereabouts was almost completely deserted owing to the inroads of brigands from Kasse and Alaba. By the roadside I noticed one of the poles which the Gallas use to commemorate the death of a great warrior. It was about 15 feet high, and on the top were perched a bullock's skull and horns and a few feathers. The bark had been left on for the first foot, removed for the second foot, and so alternately to the top, after the style of the black and white poles used in surveying.

The hills which are visible from Shashamana are called Abaro, Duro, Albaso, and Alutu, taking them in their order from south to north. In the far distance lies Mount Zukwala, which is a sacred mountain and the resort of many priests. To the west are the mountain ranges of Kasse and Kambata. I was shewn a strange phenomenon in this district. It was a small hole in the ground from which came a strong current of air. I suppose it must be the exit of some underground cavern.

Lake Zwai (often called by the natives Dambal), although close to Addis Ababa and extremely picturesque, seems to be little known. Starting from the southern end, where the Suk-Suk River leaves it to flow into Lake Hora Abyata (wrongly marked Hora Daka on the maps), one travels up a broad plain of alluvial soil, bounded by bush country in which many magnificent trees stand out picturesquely. All

this open tract of country is grazed over by herds of cattle, sheep, and goats. In the rains, when the lake rises, it is completely covered by water. At the north-west corner of the lake, a thick belt of bush comes right down to the water's edge.

In the lake itself there are five islands: Dadacha, Tulu Guda, Funduro, Dabra Sina, and Galila. The largest of these is Tulu Guda, which consists of two hills, one called Guba Mote and the other Gumerge. On this island the Abyssinians have a prison for important political prisoners, and there is also a church with a number of priests. The islands are inhabited by a people called La-Ke, who are said to speak a language peculiar to themselves, but as a matter of fact, I believe it is the same as that spoken in Walamo. The shore-dwellers are Gallas. Among the latter I noticed two sections called Gona and Watu, which is interesting because two sections with the same names are found right down in Boran in the south. The neighbourhood of the lake appeared to be perfectly healthy, and in February there were no mosquitoes.

The lakes shew some curious contrasts. Lake Zwai in the north is fresh. The lake immediately south of it, Hora Abyata, is salt, and has some hot springs on its shores. The lake lying to the east of this has several names: Hora Oitu, Hora Robi, Hora Daka, and Langara. It also is salt. There is a stream about 25 yards broad, called Hora Kala or Hora Gato, flowing from this lake to Hora Abyata. The water of this stream, though brackish, is drinkable. Wild fowl, in incredible numbers, may be seen here at sunset. There is no opening between Hora Abyata (marked Hora Daka on the maps) and Lake Shala, as shewn on the maps. Sometimes, after heavy rain, the water in Hora Abyata rises and flows over its banks into Lake Shala. The latter is salt, but Lake Awasa to the south is fresh.



MY CAMP AT SILTI.



To summarise, then, we have :

| | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|--------------|----------------|
| Lake Zwai | . | . | . | . | Fresh water. | No crocodiles. |
| „ Hora Abyata (marked Hora Daka on the maps) | . | . | . | . | Salt | „ „ „ |
| „ Langara | . | . | . | . | „ | „ „ |
| „ Shala. | . | . | . | . | „ | „ „ |
| „ Awasa | . | . | . | . | Fresh | „ „ |
| „ Abaya (Margherita) | . | . | . | . | „ | Crocodiles. |
| „ Chamo | . | . | . | . | „ | „ |
| „ Stefanie | . | . | . | . | Salt | „ „ |
| „ Rudolf | . | . | . | . | „ | „ |

Why are some of these lakes salt and others fresh, and why are some full of crocodiles and others not ?

While I was in Addis Ababa early in 1922, Alamu Woyessa was brought up for trial. On the day appointed for the hearing of the case, I went to the court, accompanied by Mr. Zaphiro, C.M.G., the Oriental Secretary at the Legation. Mr. Zaphiro is one of the finest linguists I have ever met, and his knowledge of Abyssinia and the Abyssinians is vast. We had taken the precaution to send on our witness ahead, so that he would be there in good time. In due course, Alamu was produced and our witness was called. But he did not appear, and although the ushers were sent to look for him, he was nowhere to be found. As a result, to our intense disgust, the case had to be postponed for another week. When we ran the missing witness to earth and asked him why he had failed to put in an appearance, he could only offer the unconvincing explanation that he had been unable to get through the crowd.

A week later, we again went to the court. This time, to make no mistake, we took our witness with us, and deposited him safely within reach. Ras Tafari and the *Afa Negus* (Chief Justice) were present in state, and the court was crowded with notabilities, as an important trial was to come on in connection with the murder of a French officer who had been

travelling to the south. This case was called first, and we saw several people condemned to death—an imposing and impressive ceremony.

After this, Alamu was again brought in, his heavy chains clanking as he hobbled up before the judges. I gave all the details about the stolen mails and produced the letters which Alamu had sent to me demanding ransom. Our witness was called next. He was the man from whom Alamu had robbed the mails, and who had been taken to his lair and given messages for me by Alamu himself. He gave his evidence beautifully without a hitch, and the court was visibly impressed. Everything went swimmingly—from our point of view—till Ras Tafari asked him whether he could pick out Alamu among the people in court. Our witness looked about, and then said blankly that he could not possibly recognise him as everybody looked to him more or less the same. Nothing we said would make him change his mind, although he must have known Alamu as well as he knew his own brother. It was quite obvious that he had been terrorised by some of Alamu's boon companions, who, with fuzzy heads and ferocious countenances, were there in force. The same pressure, no doubt, had been the cause of his non-appearance at the first trial.

We then asked the court to take cognisance of the letters which Alamu had written, but this they declined to do on the ground that they were unsealed. It was useless to go on under these conditions, so the question of the stolen mails had to be dropped. However, I was feeling vindictive by this time, and pointed out that, even if the robbery of the mails could not be proved, the court ought to enquire into the numerous murders of Abyssinian subjects which Alamu had committed. I gave a brief summary of these, and finally the Minister for War announced that they would be investigated. Then Alamu was led away

by his guards. He had certainly scored off me that day, but later on he received his deserts for all his misdeeds.

Shortly after this I left again for Mega, and after a short stay there set out on 24th April, 1922, to visit the country between Lakes Stefanie and Rudolf.

The route from Mega proceeds via Kuncharo, an isolated mountain standing in the midst of a large plain. If required, water can be obtained from a spring which is situated almost on the top of the mountain, but it entails a long and hard climb.

The country from Kuncharo gradually ascends till it reaches the Tertale mountains. It is a first-class piece of grazing ground, quite one of the best I have seen in Boran.

Tertale is part of the Boran Province and is under the administration of Fitaurari Ayala. He has as his representative there Basha Mogose, who lives at the capital which is situated near the summit of Gandile Mountain.

There is another town on the top of Hichenni Mountain, which is only a few miles from our border.

The descent from the Tertale escarpment to Lake Stefanie is extremely difficult by the northern route, and is only just possible with very lightly loaded camels. There are other passes in the middle which one can get through with mules, and there is a better camel route to the south via El Dima.

The natives in Tertale are Boran. To the east of the Sagan River, just before it enters the lake, are Watu, one of the outcast Boran tribes. To the west of the Sagan are Arbore, who are closely related to the Boran, speaking that language as well as one of their own.

Lake Stefanie, or Chalbe as it is called locally, is very disappointing. It seems to be gradually drying up, and at the present moment is nothing more

imposing than a large pan. The greater part of it consists of miles and miles of sun-baked mud covered with small white shells. It lies between two parallel ranges of mountains, say from 12 to 15 miles apart, and makes a natural and easy port into our territory.

The country to the immediate west of Stefanie is called Hamarkoke, and adjoining that is the large province of Bako. The former is under Fitaurari Mukria, the son of the late Dajazmach Garmami, and the latter under Dajazmach Marid. The western boundary of Hamarkoke is formed by the dry river-bed Wanchu Feche which enters Rudolf some distance above our boundary line, so it is this province which forms our northern boundary between Stefanie and Rudolf and not Bako.

The capital of Hamarkoke is situated close to Kecha Mountain. It is a very small town under Ato Dasta.

The route from Stefanie to Rudolf proceeds through a pass to the south of Asille Mountain which winds up a dry river-bed and is not difficult. It then crosses an unattractive terrain, consisting chiefly of thorn bush till Rudolf is reached.

The natives in Hamarkoke are called Hamar and are totally different from the Boran. They are a war-like race, smear themselves with mud, wear ostrich feathers in their hair on special occasions, and are in every respect finer specimens. I imagine they are closely related to their neighbours the Gallaba who inhabit the country in the neighbourhood of Rudolf and the Omo, although they speak a different language. There used to be Arbore in Hamarkoke, but these have now fled to the shores of Rudolf and are living with the Gallaba. There is a small trading camp of Abyssinians on the shores of Rudolf. They barter coffee for goats and cattle, but I saw no signs of Abyssinians along the border. I was told on good authority

that the Abyssinian post at Kerre on the Omo only consists of a few men, and that these are generally at Bako Town, the capital of Bako.

The Gallaba gave me the impression of being a force to be considered. Undoubtedly, they with a backing of Abyssinians are the people responsible for raiding into our territory. One can see at a glance our Gabbra and Boran tribes would have no chance against them. In addition they have a certain number of rifles but very few cartridges. One can but admire their carriage and general behaviour which is so totally different from the cowardly Boran. I imagine they would make excellent recruits for the K.A.R. if ever this country came under our sphere of influence.

The natives in the Bako province as far as I can gather are collectively called Shanqalla, these being subdivided into numerous subdivisions such as the Gallaba, Hamar, Kule, and Male. These subdivisions in many cases have a distinct language of their own, so one could almost imagine this place was the origin of the Tower of Babel.

From Lake Rudolf I returned to the Hamarkoke Mountains and travelled over them till I reached the Abyssinian village near Kecha. From there I descended into the plain between Buna and Kule, and travelling up this eventually reached Balta in the Gamo province. The route was very difficult in parts owing to the gradients and thick bush.

As we were travelling up a dry river bed between Lake Rudolf and the Hamarkoke Mountains, we suddenly saw water coming down the sandy bed, although there was no sign of rain. I called to the boys to get the camels out. This was not an easy matter, as the banks were steep and one had to find a suitable opening. The water came down very quickly, carrying with it sand and sticks and all sorts of rubbish. The camels, as the water reached their feet, tried to

break back, making funny little mincing steps, and it was only with the greatest difficulty we got them out. In the meantime the dry river became a roaring torrent, and unfortunately all my ration sheep, in the stupid way these animals have of always doing the wrong thing, had rushed to the opposite side of the river. This entailed another rescue. However in the end we collected everything together, only just in time, as soon the river became impassable. It might have been a very serious danger if we had not been lucky.

I had another lucky escape in a gully not far from here. I was riding my mule at the time and the caravan was a straggling line with the camels leading. Suddenly, without any warning, three bulls rushed down the gully at a mad gallop, tore past the camels, and only missed me by a couple of inches. I was never so frightened in my life.

The route from Balta onwards travels over the mountains of Gamo and is wonderfully beautiful. In one place the path is cut in a precipice with a drop of over 1,000 feet. It is so narrow that two mules could not pass each other in many places. I have never seen anything quite like this before in Abyssinia. The cool mountain passes were very pleasant after the hot plains of Rudolf.

It is difficult to give a pen picture of this country. I can only describe it as being composed of one mountain range after another, separated by small valleys. All these ranges are connected by mule paths.

I was treated with great kindness by the Abyssinians I came in contact with, and Dajazmach Asaffa gave me a wonderful reception at Balta.

On the last stage of the journey, between Lake Zwai and Addis Ababa, we had the misfortune to be caught in the most terrific storm I have ever experienced. Just before reaching Urbarak, the road

crosses a range of hills. They are not very high but the descent is steep and difficult. We were travelling over these hills in the afternoon when storm-clouds began to gather. We made the best pace we could—which, with a caravan of mules, does not amount to more than three miles an hour—but about five o'clock, just as we were going down the worst part, the storm broke. For an hour past, great purplish-black clouds had been rolling up till the whole face of the sky was covered and it became so dark that one could not have read print. Flashes of lightning, which lit up the country for miles around, now began to play from these clouds, the thunder pealed so that the very ground under our feet seemed to shake, and in a few moments the deluge started. At the foot of the hills, the road runs up what is ordinarily a dry river-bed with steep sides. If we had been half an hour later, we should probably have been held up here, but as it was we managed to get through all right, the storm increasing every moment in intensity. Beyond this, the road crosses a large grass plain, over a mile wide, intersected by one or two small gulleys. By this time, the rain was coming down in such quantities that the whole plain was under water and every shallow depression was running like a mill-race.

Our plight now began to alarm me, but it was clearly impossible to camp where we were, so we had to drive the mules across the plain while the lightning crackled, the thunder pealed, and the rain hissed all around us. In a heavy storm, mules always turn their backs to the rain and tuck in their tails. They remain in this position with a most woebegone expression on their faces till they are driven on. And it is no easy matter to drive a caravan of loaded mules through a tropical thunderstorm, more especially when it is pitch-dark. I always maintain that, under such conditions, there are few people who can beat

or even approach good Abyssinian servants. In spite of the storm and the darkness, we struggled along, pitched camp, and got the loads under cover. Soon after the tents were up, the storm abated, and we passed an uneventful night.

We returned to Addis Ababa on 9th June, 1922, and shortly afterwards I went home to England on leave.

When I returned in 1923, it was as Consul for South-western Abyssinia. It was sad to think that I should never again see Mega, which I loved so dearly, but the prospect of exploring new country and meeting fresh people was some consolation. But these later experiences I hope to recount in another book.

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